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WOMEN'S VALUES IN THE MĀHABHĀRATA

Thesis submitted to the Karnatak University, Dharwad
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Doctor of Philosophy in Sanskrit

by

Kum. Nivedita R. Siddhanti

M.A.

under the guidance of

Dr. M. N. Joshi

M.A., Ph.D

Reader

P.G. Dept. of Studies in Sanskrit
Karnatak University, Dharwad - 580 003

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Certificate

I certify that this thesis " WOMEN'S VALUES IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA " presented by Kum. Nivedita R. Siddhanti represents her original work and has not been submitted for any other Diploma or Degree in any university. The work has been carried by her, in the Department of Sanskrit, Karnatak University, Dharwad, under my guidance and supervision.

Date: 11-5-2005


Dr. M. N. Joshi

Reader

P. G. Dept. of studies in Sanskrit
Karnatak University, Dharwad

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled as " Women's values in the Mahābhārata " submitted to Karnatak University by me is a result of an investigation carried out by me under the guidance of Dr. M. N. Joshi, M.A., Ph.D., reader, Dept. of Sanskrit, Karnatak University Dharwad. I also declare that this thesis has not been submitted before to this university or any university for the award of any degree.

Dharwad


Kum. Nivedita R. Siddhanti



Preface

The present thesis entitled "Women's Values in the Mahabharata " brings out multi-dimensional activities of women in the Mahābhārata. The thesis brings to light the women's activities in comparison with the ancient women. All these informations are brought here in a systematic way.

Such work of task was successfully accomplished due to kind and generous encouragement of my research guide Dr. M.N.Joshi, Reader, Dept. of Sanskrit, Karnatak University Dharwad. Throughout the course of my Ph.D. studies, my Guide was enlightening me with useful information with regard to the work of my thesis. For, I ever remain grateful to my Research Guide.

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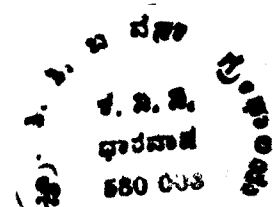
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 Kum. Nivedita R. Siddhanti



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Abbreviations

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa	-	Ś.Br.
Aitareya Brāhmaṇ	-	A.Br.
Manu Smṛti	-	Manu
Yājñavalkya Smṛti	-	Yājñavalkya
Mahābhārata	-	Mbh.
Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa	-	T.Br.
Taittiriya Samhita	-	T.S.

Introduction

The entire creation consists of the two species - male and female. The latter, termed commonly as the better half. As a daughter, wife and mother she has kept the universe going. The woman is the object of love and affection. She is the queen of the house, loving mother and ideal mistress. After marriage, couples lose their separate individuality and become one for which Ardhanārīśvara form of Umā and Maheśvara is the

prime example. The credit of this non-dualistic thinking mainly goes to the women folk as they are the very embodiment of self-surrender, compassion, forgiveness, tender feelings, loving attitude and every thing that can be claimed pious and good.

The present thesis is an attempt to present a clear picture of various prominent women characters of Mahābhārata like Gāndhāri, Draupadi, Kunti etc. with reference to the aspects of education, social, political, economical conditions and marriage and family life of women etc. The female deities of the Mahābhārata are also dealt with. Since ancient times, the Indian woman is searching for her identity in the male dominated society. The epic includes the characters of Draupadi who reveals the most touching profile of Indian woman. Gāndhāri and Kunti as well as Devayāni, Sāvitrī and Damayanti are the most inspiring characters. Mahābhārata attains the sublime through such women characters. It is a pleasure to study such great women characters.

Women are worshipped in Indian society. Manu has rightly said,

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।
यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥

- Manu.III.56

"God resides there where women are worshipped." They

are worshipped as mother, for which Vedas give prominent place. मातृदेवो भव । This epic has enshrined for us certain imperishable ideals of Indian womanhood. These women abode faith in Dharma and proved that there was a Dharma or the moral law ever present and ever active, which regulated the universe. Even in the hours of supreme crisis, they embraced the cause of virtue and righteousness. Gāndhārī could utter these ever memorable words to her son Duryodhana यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः । ("victory is there where there is righteousness.") The women preserved the unity of the family by their good behaviour, virtues, sincerity etc. They lead their life as an example for others.

The great epic Mahābhārata is an embodiment of such eminent characters, and records the popular religious traditions which have been the perennial source of various aspects of Hinduism. The Mahābhārata teaches the lesson of reality of life. Hence, it can be a guide to everyone for achieving success in all the stages of life. It is the most remarkable work in sanskrit literature next to the Samhitās. The teachings of this epic are useful not only for Indian people, but also for men and women of all the places at all the times.

Meaning of Mahābhārata :

Mahābhārata is reckoned as Itihāsa, means 'History' which tends to be a record of facts about important individuals and

events. The expression such as “तत्र इतिहासं आचक्षते” (Nir.II.24) states a traditional account, shows that the word *Itihāsa* signifies the traditional lore. The word *Itihāsa* can be explained as *iti-ha-asa*, which means "This was so", "This happened so" or "This was the tradition."

The word *Itihāsa* occurs in the Atharva-veda², which mentions *purāṇa*, *gāṭha* and *nārāsaṃsi* along with *Itihāsa* as following Mahāvratyā. The Mahābhārata is considered as *purātana itihāsa* or the history of ancient period and is as sacred as Veda.³

References to *Itihāsa* occurs in the Brhaddevata, which is later than Yāska and earlier than Pāṇini and ascribed to about the 5th century B.C. Brhaddevata, in fact contains in verse a large number of legends connected with the hymns of the Rgveda, and comprises the oldest and systematic collection of legends which we possess in sanskrit literature. It narrates for instance, the *itihāsa* of Devāpi and Samtanu already related by Yāska. At a later stage, this story appears as a part of wider tradition in the Mahābhārata where a third brother is mentioned

2. Atharva Veda XV, 6.10

3. इयं हि वेदैः समितं पवित्रमपि चोत्तमम् ।

श्रव्याणमुत्तमं चेदं पुराणमृषिसंस्तुतम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.13

- the name of the father is different - and Śamitanu has become Śamitanu. It is probable that a part of the lost *Itihāsa - purāṇa* literature was incorporated in the Mahābhārata, the nucleus of which must be put in the early stages of classical sanskrit literature.⁴

Mahābhārata is self-explanatory by its name. Bharata is acclaimed as the first emperor of Bhārata. The theme of this great epic is the fight between the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavās belonging to the dynasty of Bharata. That is why this book is called Mahābhārata.⁵

The great size of the volume and its contents have contributed much in getting the name Mahābhārata. It is rightly said “महत्त्वात् भारवत्त्वाच्च महाभारतमुच्यते ।” (Mbh.आदि.1.274). Here two compound words *Mahat* and *Bhāravat* are used. Being a voluminous (Mahat) work and (Bhāravat) heavy to lift and carry, the great epic came to be called Mahābhārata. It is the longest literary work in the history of literature. Once the devas put the Mahābhārata in one pan of a balance and the vedas in the other pan. Then the devas were convinced that

4. Cf. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol.II, The Rāmakrishna mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta - 1962, Page No. 6107

5. भरतानां महज्जन्म महाभारतमुच्यते । - Mbh.आदि.62.39



the Mahābhārata weighed more than all the vedas put together.⁶

The Author of the Epic :

Bhagavān Vyāsa is believed to be the author of Mahābhārata. He was a contemporary of the Pāndavas and the Kauravas. Many of the events of the Mahābhārata were personally witnessed by Vyāsa. He took three years to write this book.⁷ The original name of Bhārata which Vyāsa composed was 'Jaya'. The first śloka of the Great Epic⁸ supports this statement.

Vyāsa was the son of Parāśara and Satyavati. He was born in the island of Yamuna river.⁹ He was called Dvaipāyana as

-
6. पुरा किल सुरैः सर्वैः समेत्य तुलया धृतम् ।
चतुर्भ्यः सरहस्येभ्यो वेदेभ्यो ह्यधिकं यदा ॥
तदा प्रभृति लोकेऽस्मिन् महाभारतमुच्यते ।
महत्त्वे च गुरुत्वे च ध्रियमाणं यतोऽधिकम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.272-273
7. त्रिभिर्वर्षैः सदोत्थायी कृष्णद्वैपायनो मुनिः ।
महाभारतमाख्यानं कृतवानिदमद्भुतम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.52
त्रिभिर्वर्षैर्लब्धाकामः कृष्णदेवैपायनो मुनिः । - Mbh.आदि.62.41
8. नारायणं नमस्कृत्य नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.1
9. पुराशरेण संयुक्ता सद्यो गर्भं सुषाव सा ।
जज्ञे च यमुनाद्वीपे पराशर्यः स वीर्यवान् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.84

he was left in the island (Dvipa) of Yamuna river by Parāśara and Satyavati in his childhood.¹⁰ He told her to remember him whenever necessary and started his penance.¹¹ He was called Vyāsa as he expanded the Vedas.¹² The important themes of Vedas in the form of stories were narrated in the Mahābhārata. So it was very popularly known as the Panchama Veda. The disciples of Vyāsa, i.e. Sumantu, Jaimi, Paila, Suka and Vaiśampāyana gave this book great publicity.¹³

The Himalayas were the land of penance for Maharshi Vyāsa. The Ashrama of Vyāsa at Badri was well established. Thousands of people visit frequently Badri today also for getting mental peace. Vyāsa was the principal Guru of this Ashrama, where the teaching of the Vedas and Vedic literature was imparted to his disciples. But the working place of Vyāsa, in general, can be said to be the whole of India.

10. एवं द्वैपायनो जज्ञे सत्यवत्यां पराशरात् ।

न्यस्तो द्वीपे स यद् बालस्तस्माद् द्वैपायनः स्मृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.86

11. स मातरमनुज्ञात्य तपस्येव मनो दधे ।

स्मृतोऽहं दर्शयिष्यामि कृत्येष्विति च सोऽब्रवीत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.85

12. ब्रह्मणो ब्रह्मणानां च तथानुग्रहकाङ्क्षया ।

विद्यास वेदान् यस्मात् स तस्मात् व्यास इति स्मृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.88

13. वेदानध्यापयामास महाभारतपञ्चमान् ।

सुमन्तुं जैमिनिं पैलं शुक्रं चैव स्वात्मजम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.89

Especially the Pāṇḍavas were impressed by the teachings of Vyāsa. Indian critics have paid great respects to Vyasa in the following words.

नमः सर्वविदे तस्मै व्यासाय कविवेधसे ।
चक्रे पुण्यं सरस्वत्या यो वर्षभिव भारतम् ॥
अचतुर्वदनो ब्रह्मा द्विबाहुपरो हरिः ।
अभाल्लोचनः शम्भुर्भगवान् बादरायण ॥¹⁴

Contents of Mahābhārata :

Mahābhārata is encyclopaedic in character. In this great epic, the poet Vyāsa has touched every subject which is present in the whole world.¹⁵ It contains a reference of all the four puruṣārthas namely Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. It is rightly said "Whatever is here, may be found elsewhere; what is not, cannot be found anywhere else."¹⁶ This *Itihāsa* contains the story as victory of Pāṇḍavas over Kauravas.¹⁷

The Mahābhārata has passed through three stages of

14. M.N.Dutt, Mahābhārata, Vol.I, Parimal Publications, Delhi - 2004

15. व्यासोच्छिष्टं जगत्सर्वम् । Cf. S.P.Gupta, K.S.Ramachandran, Mahābhārata: Myth and Reality, Agam Prakashan, Delhi, 1976, Page No. 4

16. धर्मे चार्थे च कामे च मोक्षे च भरतर्षभ ।

यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.53

17. महाभारतमाख्यानं पाण्डवानां यशस्करम् । - Mbh.आदि.59.6

evolution. This book is known by three names; viz. Jaya, Bhāratasamhitā and Mahābhārata.¹⁸

There are three different opinions regarding the total number of ślokas in the Mahābhārata. The first one by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa who has composed only the very essence of Mahābhārata comprising 8,800 ślokas¹⁹ and that work was known as 'Jaya' as referred to in the first invocatory verse of the epic. The second by Vaiśampāyana, comprising of 24,000 verses is known as Bhāratasamhita.²⁰ The third (the present form) composed of a lakh of verses called the Mahābhārata was given to us by Sūta²¹. The epic which is now currently available with us contains a lakh of verse and it took perhaps centuries to get this transformation of the book from 'Jaya' to 'Mahābhārata'.

In Mahābhārata, the author Vyāsa has described not only

18. जया नामेतिहासोऽयं श्रोतव्यो विजिगीषुणा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.20

चतुर्विंशतिसाहस्रीं चक्रे भारतसंहिताम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.102

उपाख्यानेर्विना तावद् भारतं प्रोच्यते बुधैः । - Mbh.आदि.1.103

19. अष्टौ श्लोकसहस्राणि अष्टौ श्लोकशतानि च ।

अहं वेद्मि शुको वेत्ति सञ्जयो वेत्ति वा न वा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.81

20. चतुर्विंशतिसाहस्रीं चक्रे भारतसंहिताम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.102

21. एकं शतसहस्रं तु मानुषेषु प्रतिष्ठितम् ।

नारदोऽश्रावयद् देवानासितो देवलः पितृन् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.107

the secret meaning of Vedas, but also upaniṣads which are the parts of Vedas.²² Here, he described briefly itihāsa and purāṇa and also past, present and future.²³ The old age, death, fear, disease and the roots of other elements are also explained here.²⁴ The duties of the four varṇas namely Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śudra, and also the basis of purāṇa are described.²⁵

Mahābhārata contains over a lakh of verses. There is no subject on earth which is not dealt with in the Mahābhārata. None of the world's epics is so big as Mahābhārata. In size the Mahābhārata is double that of Homer's Illiad and Odyssey put together. The following śloka about it is worth mentioning now:

यथा समुद्रो भगवान् यथा मेरुर्महागिरिः ।
उभौ ख्यातौ रत्ननिधी तथा भारतमुच्यते ॥

- Mbh.आदि.62.48

22. ब्रह्मन् वेदरहस्यं च यच्चान्यत् स्थापितं मया ।

सङ्क्षोपनिषदां चैव वेदानां विस्तरक्रिया ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.62

23. इतिहासपुराणानामुन्मेषं निर्मितं च यत् ।

भूतं भव्यं भविष्यं च त्रिविधं कालसंज्ञितम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.63

24. जरामृत्युभयव्याधिभावाभावविनिश्चयः ।

विविधस्य धर्मस्य ह्यभ्रमाणां च लक्षणम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.64

25. चातुर्वर्ण्यविधानं च पुराणानां च कृत्स्नशः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.1.65

Mahābhārata is a whole literature in itself containing a philosophy which has been an unfailing and perennial source of spiritual strength to the people.

The whole Mahābhārata is divided into eighteen books, each book being called a parva. The parvas are named so as to give a hint of their central theme. They are as follows:

- 1) Ādi Parva
- 2) Sabhā Parva
- 3) Vana Parva
- 4) Virāṭa Parva
- 5) Udyoga Parva
- 6) Bhīṣma Parva
- 7) Droṇa Parva
- 8) Karṇa Parva
- 9) Śalya Parva
- 10) Saṃvata Parva
- 11) Stri Parva
- 12) Śānti Parva
- 13) Anuśāsana Parva
- 14) Āśvamedhika Parva
- 15) Āśramavāsika Parva
- 16) Mausala Parva
- 17) Mahāprasthānika Parva
- 18) Svargārohaṇa Parva

The main theme of Mahābhārata seems to be the victory of righteousness (Dharma) over viciousness (Adharma) as declared in Gāndhārī's blessings to her son "victory is there where there is righteousness"²⁶ which is the universal advice for all men and women at all times. By the characters of great women in Mahābhārata, we can realise that righteousness (Dharma) could be reached in human beings. The English term Religion does not convey the full connotation of the saṃskṛta word Dharma derived from the root Dhṛ meaning 'to hold together' or 'to preserve'.²⁷

Hindu Dharma is called sanātana dharma which means 'Eternal Religion'. The 'Ancient Law' is based on the Vedas.²⁸ According to the author of the epic Vedavyāsa, Dharma is associated with sustenance.²⁹ It is our sanātana dharma that teaches us to love our motherland and also our mother in the

26. यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः ।

27. Cf. Keshoram Aggarwal, The Kalyāna Kalpataru, Sanatana Dharma Number, Vol.39. No.1, Gita press, Gorakhpur, Page.No.260-261

28. वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलं स्मृतिशीले च तद्विदाम् ।
आचारश्चैव साधूनामात्मनस्तुष्टिरेव च ॥ - Manu.II.6

29. धारणाद्धर्म इत्याहुः धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः ।
यत् स्याद्धारणसंयुक्तं स धर्म इति निश्चयः ॥ - Mbh.Karna.69.58

same spirit and devotion.³⁰ This is applicable to the entire world even in the present day circumstances. It is to be noted that the problems arising today are due to the absence of love and devotion as mentioned in our sanātana dharma. Mahābhārata suggests different types of dharma to men and also to women. After marriage, man follows Gṛhastha Dharma and women follow pātivratya. The men and women of Mahābhārata proved that Dharma protects all and also preserves all that is created.

Keeping in mind the domestic, social humanistic and spiritual functions of religion, the followers of Sanātana Dharma advised the people to stick to their proper duties by all means. They warned them not to leave dharma even during the pains of death.³¹ According to Manu smṛti Āchāra (good

30. आ यद् वामीयचक्षसा मित्र वयं च सुरयः ।

व्यचिष्टे बाहुपाय्ये यतेमहि स्वराज्ये ॥ - Rgveda.V.66.6

जनं बिभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नानाधर्माणं पृथिवी यथौकसम् ।

सहस्रधारा द्रविणस्य मे दुहां ध्रुवेव धेनुरनपस्फुरन्ती ॥ - Atharva Veda.XII.1.45

31. न जातु कामान्न भयान्न लोभात्-

धर्मं त्यजेज्जीवितस्यापि हेतोः ।

नित्यो धर्मः सुखदुःखे त्वनित्ये

जीवो नित्यो हेतुरस्य त्वनित्यः ॥ - Mbh.Svargārohana.5.63

नाहं कामान्न संरम्भान्न द्वेषान्नार्थं कारणात् ।

न हलवादाहलोभाद् वा धर्मं जह्यां कथञ्चन ॥ - Mbh.Udyoga.91.24

conduct) is the highest Dharma.³² According to Sanātana Dharma, women are worthy to be respected by not only her husband, but also by the other family members. They should respect and enrich her with ornaments.³³ One should worship women to please the God. Because Gods abide in those homes where women are worshipped. Where they are not worshipped, all activities of such persons prove futile.³⁴

Date of Mahābhārata :

The kali varṣa starts from 3102 B.C. The great Mahābhārata war was fought at a period when the end of Dvāpara Yuga merged into the dawn of kali yuga.³⁵ So, it can be said that the great war was fought round about 3102 B.C. Pādavas ruled the country for 36 years after the war. Vyāsa wrote this divine epic, after the death of the Pāṇdavas. Vyāsa took three years to complete this work. Therefore, it can be

32. आचारः परमो धर्मः श्रुत्युक्तः स्मार्त एव च ॥ - Manu.I.108

33. पितृभिर्भ्रातृश्चैताः पतिभिर्देवरैस्तथा ।

पूज्या भूषयितव्याश्च बाहुकल्याणमीप्सुभिः ॥ - Manu.III.55

34. यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥ - Manu.III.56

35. अन्तरे चैव सम्प्राप्ते कलिद्वापरयोरभूत् ।

समन्तपञ्चके युद्धं कुरुपाण्डवसेनयोः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.2.13

concluded that Vyāsa wrote the epic in 3100 B.C. The Pāṇḍavas commenced their Mahāprasthāna after entrusting the administration of the state into the hands of Parikṣit. This must have happened in 3102 B.C. Parikṣit ruled the country for 60 years and so his son Janamejaya became king in 3042 B.C. It was after two years of his becoming king he concluded that Vaiśampāyana first expounded 'Jaya' (Mahābhārata) to the sages assembled there.³⁶ Foreign chronologists argued that it was in the 10th century B.C. that the Mahābhārata battle took place.³⁷ According to them, after the war between the kurus and the pāṇcālas, it was a period of hero-worship and songs on the heroes of kurus and pāṇḍavas were sung and landed over from one generation to the other and gradually those songs took place in the form of the Mahābhārata.³⁸ The Persian translation of the epic (Dās Mahābhārata) by Holtzmann in the medieval period was another contribution to the study of the Mahābhārata.³⁹

36. Vettam Mani - Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasidass Private Limited Delhi - 1975, page No.122-123

37. Ibid page No. 123

38. Ibid

39. Cf. Tiwary (Diwakar), The concept of state in the Mahābhārata, Vidyanidhi Delhi, 1990, Page No. 1

Many scholars, who studied Mahābhārata belong to different schools. There is a school of thought which states that during the golden period of Buddhists Brāhmā had a hold on Hinduism. Therefore, it can be said that the Mahābhārata was written during the 6th century B.C. Then there were 8,000 verses in the Mahābhārata.⁴⁰ Towards the second stage of Mahābhārata, the epic grew into 24,000 ślokas. During this stage, the epic got a vaiṣṇavite colour and Śri Kṛṣṇa was adored as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Megasthenes who visited India in 300 B.C. records that the majority of Hindus were Vaiṣṇavites at that period. Therefore, a set of foreigners conclude that those portions of the Mahābhārata could have been written only after Buddha and after the attack on Bhārata by Greeks i.e. by 300 B.C.⁴¹

The third stage of the epic, is its present form and it was at this stage that it included new philosophy in it. Manusmṛti became popular in the fifth century A.D. And therefore, the third stage of the Mahābhārata must have started before that, in the 3rd century A.D.⁴²

40. Vettam Maṇi - Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasidass Private Limited Delhi - 1975, Page No.123

41. Ibid

42. Ibid

Scholars, who studied this Great Epic belong to different schools i.e. the Theory of Analytical school, The Synthetic School and the Traditional School.⁴³

1) The Theory of Analytical School :

Lassen,⁴⁴ who belonged to this school, places its dates about 350 B.C. According to Hopkins,⁴⁵ there was no epic at all. His approach to the study of the epic is known as atomistic approach. He considers the time of the epic as more advanced one. He fixed the time of the epic between 400 B.C. to 400 A.D.⁴⁶ According to him, the Bhārata (kuru) was composed in 400 B.C. to 200 B.C.⁴⁷ He views that the epic was in a developmental process, though it was a tale of Pāṇḍu heroes. During this period i.e. from 400 B.C. to 200 B.C., no instructive form of the epic had existed. He considers Kṛṣṇa as a demi-god. He further places the period of the epic between 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. In this stage, more matter was added to the Epic and Kṛṣṇa came to be known as all-god. Even the purāṇic material was incorporated into the epic.⁴⁸

43. Cf. Tiwary (Diwakar), The concept of state in the Mahābhārata, Vidyanidhi, Delhi, 1990, Page No. 31

44. Ibid

45. Ibid, Page No.32

46. Ibid, Page No.33

47. Ibid

48. Ibid

2) The Synthetic Theory :

According to Dahlmann who is the main exponent of this school, the epic is a unified work.⁴⁹ The supporters of this school fixed the date of the epic not later than the 5th century B.C.⁵⁰

To reach a probable date of the epic, the account of war has been considered. The date of the epic, as suggested by Hopkins is acceptable on two grounds. It is quite balanced and it has been generally accepted by the scholars.

3) The Traditional School :

According to the traditional Indian view the Mahābhārata was composed just after the Great Battle by Vyāsa who was the father of Dhṛtarāshtra. Pāṇḍu and Vidura by Niyogavidhi and had witnessed the war. Most of the views of scholars have based their calculations on the genealogies as given by the Purāṇas. According to these scholars, the date of the Bhārata battle ranges from 950 B.C. to 3137 B.C. So, the date of the composition, according to these traditional views, ranges from

49. Ibid, Page No.34

50. Ibid

950 B.C. to 3137 B.C.⁵¹

Foreign Tribes :

The Mahābhārata contains many references to the foreign tribes in many contexts. The Hūṇas are referred to as being defeated by Nakula in the western direction⁵² beyond the Indus river and again the epic shows them as having come to offer present to Yudhiṣṭhira.⁵³ The epic refers to the Romans in the south.⁵⁴ A large number of Roman coins and potteries belong to the 1st century A.D. have been found at Arika medu, two miles south of Pondichery. This is the oldest occurrence of the

51. Brajdeo Prasad Roy, Political Ideas and Institutions in the Mahābhārata, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1975

52. द्वारपालं च तरसा वशे चक्रे महाद्युतिः ।

रामठान् हारहूणांश्च प्रतीच्याश्चैव ये नृपाः ॥

तान् सर्वान् वशे चक्रे शासनादेव पाण्डवः ।

तत्रस्थः प्रेषयामास वासुदेवाय भारत ॥ - Mbh.सभा.32.12-13

53. जातरुपमनर्घ्यं च ददुस्तस्यैकपादकाः ।

चीनाच्छकांस्तथा चौड्रान् बर्बरान् वनवासिनः ॥

वाष्पेयान् हारहूणांश्च कृष्णान् हैमवतांस्तथा ।

नीपानूपानधिगतवान् विविधान् द्वारवारितान् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.51.23-24

54. आटवीं च पुरीं रम्यां यवनानां पुरं तथा ।

दूतैरेव वशे चक्रे करं चैनानदापयत् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.31.72

name of the Romans in Indian literature. The Indian trade with Rome was in full swing since the beginning of the Christian era, and it continued upto the 5th century A.D. both through the land and sea routes. These evidences clearly shows south India's close contact with the Romans at least from the 1st century B.C. to the 4th century A.D., and this, in our view should be the probable date of the composition of the particular portion in the Sabha parva.

Mahabharata refers to the Rishikas and Tushāras which help us in fixing its date. The Rishika people were conquered by Arjuna beyond the Vakshu river which flowed through the Saka country.⁵⁵ The process of Arjuna's victory in the north direction shows that the Rishikas resided in central Asia, as the former had defeated them in the north after defeating the Vālhikas, Kambojakas, Dardas, and the Lohas.⁵⁶

They resided in that region upto the 1st quarter of the 2nd

55. ऋषिकेष्वपि संग्रामो बभूवातिभयंकरः ।

तारकामयसंकाशः परस्त्वृषिकपार्थयोः ॥ - Mbh.सभा.27.26

56. ततः परमविक्रान्तो बाह्लीकान् पाकशासनिः ।

महता परमिर्देन वशे चक्रे दुरासदान् ॥

गृहीत्वा तु बलं सालं फाल्गुनः पाण्डुनन्दनः ।

दरदान् सह काम्बोजैरजयत् पाकशासनिः ॥ - Mbh.सभा.27.22-23

century B.C. Hence the date of that portion may be assigned to that period.

The Tushāras are mentioned as having offered presents to Yudhisthira.⁵⁷ It is believed that the Tushāra-Rishikas ruled in India from the beginning of the Christian era to the second century A.D. Hence, the date of composition of the epic may be between the 2nd century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D. or even after that.⁵⁸

The Mahābhārata refers to the Pahlavas along with the Yavanas, Gandharvas and the Chinas; these again are grouped together with the Śaka and Yavanas, and are referred to as being defeated by Nakula in the western direction.⁵⁹

57. शकास्तुषाराः कङ्काश्च रोमशाः श्रृङ्गिणो नराः ।

महागजान् दूरगमान् गणितानर्बुदान् हयान् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.51.30

58. Brajdeo Prasad Roy, Political Ideas and Institutions in Mahabharata, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1975 Pg.No.14

59. रत्नानि भूरीण्यादाय सम्प्रतस्थे युधाम्पतिः ।

ततः सागरकुक्षिस्थान् म्लेच्छान् परमदारुणान् ॥

पह्लवान् बर्बरांश्चैव किरातान् युवनाञ्छकान् ।

ततो रत्नान्युपादाय वशे कृत्वा च पार्थिवान् ।

न्यवर्तत कुरुश्रेष्ठो नकुलश्चित्रमार्गवित् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.33.16-17



The Ābhiras are referred to as having settled on the banks of the Sarasvati river along with the Śudras in the Indus valley.⁶⁰ This clearly indicates that they had settled in the Indus valley and might have lived in 2nd century B.C.

Numismatic References :

The numismatic references also go on a long way in fixing the date of the ancient works. In the Mahābhārata, king Rītuparṇa had appointed Nala as his Āśvādhyaksha on a salary of "Śataṁ Śatāh".⁶¹ This may be supposed as his monthly pay: One hundred Śatamānas per month; Śataṁ means 100, and Śatāh means Śatamānas, so the annual salary would be 100 x 12 = 1,200 Śatamānas. These are 120000 Rattis of silver and when converted into the Kārshāpaṇas each of 32 Rttis, would be 3,750 silver Kārshāpaṇas coins.

The epic contains a very interesting information regarding the 'Prati' a coin-type. Nārada wants to know from Yudhishtira whether he distributed seed and food to his peasantry in

60. शूद्राभीरगणश्चैव ये चाश्रित्य सरस्वतीम् ।

वर्तयान्ति च ये मत्स्यैर्ये च पर्वतवासिनः ॥ - Mbh.सभा.32.10

61. स त्वमातिष्ठ योगं तं येन शीघ्रा हया मम ।

भवेयुरश्वाध्यक्षोऽसि वेतनं ते शतं शतम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.67.6

distress, and advanced agricultural relief-loans to them at the concessional rate of one Prati for each one hundred coins.⁶² The existence of Prati coin by this particular name is seen from the 4th century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.

The Mahābhārata refers to the Prākāravaprakuṇḍala⁶³ which was put on in the ears. In Prākāravaprakuṇḍala the Vapra seems to be the spiral attached, and Prākara the cubical back portion of the Kuṇḍlas familiar to us in the scriptures of the Mauryan and the Śuṅga periods and later as such this may be the date of the specific portion of the Mahābhārata.

The date of the Mahābhārata can be fixed on the basis of architectural details. Among these, Śiśumārapuram is very important. On the occasion of the Swayamvara of Draupadi, the Swayamvara mantapa built was known as Śiśumārapuram,⁶⁴

62. काचिन्न भक्तं बीजं च कर्षकस्यावसीदति ।

प्रतीकं च शतं वृद्ध्या ददास्युणमनुग्रहम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.5.79

63. अथापरोऽदृश्यत रूपसम्पदा

स्त्रीणामलङ्कारघरो बृहत्पुमान् ।

प्राकारवप्रे प्रतिमुच्य कुण्डले

दीर्घे च कम्बूपरि हाटके शुभे ॥ - Mbh.विराट.11.1

64. उपोपविष्टा मञ्चेषु द्रुष्टुकामाः स्वयंवरम् ।

ततः पौरजनाः सर्वे सागरोद्धूतनिःस्वनाः ॥ ⇨

which is the gateway of architecture of the city, railing and maṇḍapa. This is seen on the Sāñchi gateway and this architectural gateway-motif continued upto the Kuśāna period, as the Mathurā art of this period furnishes many examples of this design. The term Siśumārapuram stands for the architrave of Torana carved with an allegator's head, built during the 2nd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D., which suggests that this may be the probable date of the respective portion of the Ādi parva in the Mahābhārata.⁶⁵

There are many stanzas of the Manusmṛti, which are found in the epic. So, it is believed that there may be a parallelism between the Mahābhārata and the Manusmṛti. This indicates close relationship between the two works. The compilers of both the works were the Bhārgavas who transformed the Bhārata into the Mahābhārata and gave final shape to the present Manusmṛti. It seems that the common stanzas were added to both the works by common composers- the Bhārgavas,

⇒ शिशुमारशिरः प्राप्य न्यविशंस्ते स्म पार्थिवाः ।

प्रागुत्तरेण नगराद् भूमिभागे समे शुभे ।

समाजवाटः शुशुभे भवनैः सर्वतो वृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.184.15-16

65. Brajdeo Prasad Roy, Political Ideas and Institutions in the Māhabhārata, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta - 1975, Pg.No.27

who were versed in Niti and Dharma. Generally, it is believed that Manusmṛti was composed during the 2nd century B.C.⁶⁶

Importance of the Mahābhārata :

Mahābhārata gains importance as it includes every aspect of human life. No epic stands in comparison with it. The importance of this Great Epic is self-explanatory in the sense that, even one lakh rupees were inadequate to meet the cost of expenses for the critical edition of the Mahābhārata. Hence, to prepare this epic, the final assistance was sought from abroad. Because, this epic contains traditionally one lakh verses (ślokas) which was more important than that of one lakh rupees.

Mahābhārata, which is a purātana itihāsa or the history of the ancient period, is as sacred as the Veda.⁶⁷ It is also considered as a Panchama Veda.⁶⁸ With the knowledge of this sacred itihāsa, one can attain mokṣa or eternal peace.⁶⁹

66. Ibid. Pg.No. 47-48

67. इयं हि वेदैः समितं पवित्रमपि चोत्तमम् ।

श्रव्याणामुत्तमं चेदं पुराणमृषिसंस्तुतम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.13

68. वेदानध्यापयामास महाभारतपञ्चमान् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.89

69. अस्मिन्नर्थश्च धर्मश्च निखिलेनोपदिश्यते ।

इतिहास महापुण्ये बुद्धिश्च परिनैष्ठिकी ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.17

According to Vyāsa, Mahābhārata is a sacred Dharmaśāstra, a good Arthaśāstra and the best mokṣaśāstra.⁷⁰ It is a bundle of śrutis in which importance of brāhmaṇas and cows is emphasised.⁷¹ It is said that by hearing the story of kṣatriya woman Vidula, a woman gets a son who is wise, virtuous and destroyer of evils.⁷²

The teachings of Gitā, Viṣṇusahasranama and Vidura niti are worthy to be understood by every Indian to succeed in their life. Among the four puruṣārthas, Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa - Dharma is given prime importance over the rest. Throughout the epic, the author Maharshi Vyāsa has tried to assert the consequences of Dharma and Adharma. It affirms the time-honoured axiom : "Dharmo rakṣati rakṣitah" to those who feel doubtful about the efficiency of dhrama.

70. धर्मशास्त्रमिदं पुण्यमर्थशास्त्रमिदम् परम् ।

मोक्षशास्त्रमिदं प्रोक्तं व्यासोनामितबुद्धिना ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.23

71. ब्राह्मणानां गवां चैव माहात्म्यं यत्र कीर्त्यते ।

सर्वश्रुतिसमूहोऽयं श्रोतव्यो धर्मबुद्धिभिः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.62.35

72. विद्याशूरं तपःशूरं दानशूरं तपस्विनम् ।

ब्रह्मा श्रिया ददीप्यमान् साधुवादे च सम्मतम् ॥

अर्चिष्मन्तं बलोपेतं महाभागं महारथम् ।

धृतिमन्तमनाधृष्यं जेतारमपराजितम् ॥

नियन्तारमसाधूनां गोप्तारं धर्मचारिणाम् ।

ईदृशं क्षत्रिया सूते वीरं सत्यपराक्रमम् ॥ - Udyoga.136.20-22

Chapter - II

Vivāha Samskāra

Ceremonial rites and rituals occupy a place of utmost importance in the life of a devout Hindu. Every little work in the Hindu home begins with the performance of appropriate rites according to the prescribed code, which is called *samskāra*. The word *samskāra* is a derivation from the root कृ with सम् as prefix. So, it means *samśkarana*. “संस्करणं संस्कारः” सम् means "in all possible ways" and कृ means "to do" or "to act" whatever we do or act upon, we leave a permanent impression behind it. This is called संस्कार. The word *samskāra* in Latin, is called caerimonia or ceremony. Hindus believe that in the cycle of rebirth, the individual brings back his or her past *samśkāras*.¹

Indian culture suggests sixteen *samśkāras* in the life of a man right from the unborn child and the pregnant woman, till the end of life. A man, in his life time, should undergo all the sixteen *samśkāras* ordained by the Dharmaśāstras. Among all the sixteen *samśkāras*, *vivāha samśkāra* or marriage ceremony is a very important event. The word *vivāha* has been formed from the root वह (vaha) prefixed by वि (vi). It is also called

1. Cf. Keshoram Aggarwal, Kalyana Kalpataru, Hindu Samskrti Number, Vol.46, NO.1, Gita press, Gorakhpur, Oct.2000, Page No.114,115

उद्वाह there prefix being उत्. The root वह means to carry forward and the prefix 'वि' is used in the sense of special, whereas 'उत्' means 'high above'. This way 'विवाह' or 'उद्वाह' is a process of carrying forward the social, domestic, religious and spiritual obligations which is impossible for a man till he is single or else; it is an institution through which a couple transcends the lower layers of self-interest and advances on the path of self-sublimation. It is slightly different from 'marriage', as in marriage it is the sense of conjugal union that plays supreme part where as, in 'विवाह' the fulfilment of obligatory requirements and transcendental journey is the most important. Marriage functions just as an agent or a licence to satisfy the lust (sensual desire), where as 'विवाह' unites the couple for innumerable births to come.

The tie due to marriage is rather eternal. It is confined to the worldly pleasures, where as the spiritual world or to attain mokṣa is the main object of 'विवाह'. In Indian culture, it is believed that the marriage is a means and vehicle to take the wedded couple to the sublime worlds through spiritual disciplining. The wedded couple no longer remains a couple, but moulded into one. It is believed that Brahmā had created only one body of husband and wife together.²

2. द्विधा कृत्वात्मनो देहमर्धेन पुरुषावऽभवत् ।

अर्धेन नारी तस्यां स विराजमसृजत् प्रभुः ॥ - Manu.1.32

“शरीरमेकं दम्पत्योर्विधात्रा पूर्वनिर्मितम्”

- Mbh.अनुशासन.141.60

द्वाविन्द्राग्नी चरतो वै सखायौ द्वौ देवर्षि नारदपर्वतौ च ।

द्वावाश्वनौ द्वे रथस्यापि चक्रे भार्यापती द्वौ विहितौ विधात्रा ॥

- Mbh.वन.134.9

So, a man who always has a contact with only his wife is considered Brahmachāri.³ Man should always try to fulfill the desires of woman as she keeps the man happy.⁴ She should be respected, as God resides there where women are respected (worshipped). Where they are not respected (worshipped), then all actions will be fruitless.⁵

पूज्या लालयितव्याश्च स्त्रियो नित्यं जनाधिप ।

स्त्रियो यत्र पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ॥

अपूजिताश्च यत्रैताः सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ।

तदा चैतत् क्लृप्तं नास्ति यदा शोचन्ति जामयः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.46.5-6

3. तस्मात् स्वदारनिरतो ब्रह्मचारी विधीयते ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.141.60

4. यदि वै स्त्री न रोचते पुमांसं न प्रमोदयेत् ।

अप्रमोदात् पुनः पुंसः प्रजनो न प्रवर्धत ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.46.4

5. यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥ - Manu.III.56

Man loses his wealth and will not prosper in his life if women are unhappy.⁶

Woman deserves respect as she supports man even in every bad condition, and she is the root cause of Dharma.⁷ Though woman deserves respect and hence worthy to be worshipped. She is not independent right from the birth till death. She should be always safeguarded by men through out her life. Before marriage, she should be safeguarded by her father, after marriage by her husband, and in her old age, by her son.⁸

पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

पुत्राश्च स्थाविरे भावे न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.46.14

6. जामीशप्तानि गेहानि निकृन्तानीव कृत्यया ।

नैव भान्ति न वर्धन्ते श्रिया हीनानि पार्थिव ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.46.7

7. स्त्रियः पुंसां परिददे मनुर्जिगमिषुर्दिवम् ।

अनलाः स्वल्पकौपीनाः सुहृदः सत्यजिष्णवः ॥

ईर्षवो मानकामाश्च चण्डाश्च सुहृदोऽबुधाः ।

स्त्रियस्तु मानमर्हन्ति ता मानयत मानवाः ॥

स्त्रीप्रत्ययो हि वै धर्मो रतिभोगाश्च केवलाः ।

परिचर्या नमस्कारास्तदायत्ता भवन्तु वः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.46.8-10

8. पिता रक्षति कौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति ॥ - Manu.IX.3



Mainly husband and father are the only ways for women.⁹ Husband gives pleasure and father supports her in bad condition.¹⁰ According to the Mahābhārata, marriage is a Dharma for women,¹¹ and it also regards women as the wealth of the house.

श्रिय एताः स्त्रियो नाम सत्कार्या भूतिमिच्छता ।

पालिता निगृहीता च श्रीः स्त्री भवति भारत ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.46.15

Marriage is a very important event both in the life of a man and as well as a woman. After marriage, man enters into Gr̥hasthāśrama, or the stage of a house-holder for which smṛtis give much importance. According to Manu Smṛti, the householder is as necessary for society as the breath is for the body.¹² Mahābhārata states that an unmarried man is not entitled to perform याग or यज्ञ or any sacrifice.¹³ It further says

9. पतिर्वापि गतिर्नार्याः पिता वा वरवर्णिनी ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.176.7

10. गतिः पतिः समस्याथा विषमे च पिता गतिः ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.176.8

11. पाणिधर्मो नाहुषायं न पुम्भिः सेवितः पुरा ।

तं मे त्वमग्रहीत्रे वृणोमि त्वामहं ततः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.81.21.

12. यथा वायुं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमाः ॥ - Manu.III.77

13. अनग्रयोऽनाहुतयो न च विप्रपुरस्कृताः ।

यूयं ततो धर्षिताः स्थ मया वै पाण्डुनन्दनाः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.169.60

that the Gr̥hasthāśrama or the state of house-holder is the supreme among the four āśramas,¹⁴ and thus it is the mother of all āśramas.

यथा मातरमाश्रित्य सर्वे जीवन्ति जन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थाश्रमं प्राप्त्य सर्वे जीवन्ति चाश्रमाः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.141.60

A Gr̥hastha or house-holder should render offerings to Gods, Ancestors and Guests.¹⁵ To welcome the Guests is the important dharma of a Gr̥hastha.

गृहस्थानां च सुश्रोणि नातिथेर्विद्यते परम् ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.2.44

By performing all these duties, man attains Dharma, Artha and Kāma.¹⁶

Hindu Dharmaśāstras prescribe sacraments both for males and females. All the sacraments prescribed are equally necessary for both of them. But the difference is that in case

14. अत्याश्रमानयं सर्वानित्याहुर्वेदनिश्चयाः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.12.6

15. ऋषयः पितरो देवा मनुष्याश्चैव माधव ।

इज्याश्चैवार्चनीयाश्च यथा चैव निबोध मे ॥

सदा यज्ञेन देवाश्च सदाऽऽतिथ्येन मानुषाः ।

छन्दतश्च यथा नित्यमर्हान् भुञ्जीत नित्यशः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.97.5-6

16. पितृदेवातिथिकृते समारम्भोऽत्र शस्यते ।

अत्रैव हि महाराज त्रिवर्गः केवलं फलम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.12.18

of females all the saṁskāras or the sacraments should be performed silently without the recitation of mantras. But only on the occasion of matrimonial sacrament, vedic mantras were being recited, by the kulapurohitas.¹⁷ Thus, marriage was a woman's first and foremost saṁskāra performed with vedic mantras. That is why, in the Mahābhārata, Devayāni prays Tapodhana to accept her as his wife with chanting vedic mantras.¹⁸

All the Hindu smṛtikāras are unanimous so far as the sexual chastity of a lady is concerned. The most liberal Manu also is very particular about this point. He says that it is the bounden duty of a wife to serve her husband unreservedly while he is alive. Even after the husband is dead, she should not think of any other person.¹⁹ This is the characteristic feature of Indian culture.

Mahābhārata considers the love of husband and wife as selfish.²⁰ A wife attains heaven and commands respect there

17. एवमेनः शमं याति बीजगर्भसमुद्भवम् ।

तूष्णीमेताः क्रियाः स्त्रीणां विवाहस्तु समन्त्रकः ॥ - Yājñavalkya.I.13

18. स समावृतविद्यो मां भक्तां भजितुमर्हसि ।

गृहाण पाणिं विधिवन्मम मन्त्रपुरस्कृतम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.77.5

19. यस्मै दद्यात्पिता त्वेनां भ्राता वाऽनुमते पितुः ।

तं शुश्रूषेत जीवन्तं संस्थितं च न लङ्घयेत् ॥ - Manu.V.151

20. अर्थार्थी जीवलोकोऽयं न काश्चित् कस्यचित् प्रियः ।

सख्यं सोदर्ययोभ्रात्रोर्दम्पत्योर्वा परस्परम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.138.152

only by serving and nursing her husband. For her, there is no sacrificial ritual to be performed alone and no vow or fast is necessary at all.²¹

नैव यज्ञक्रियाः काश्चिन्न श्राद्धं नोपवासकम् ।

या तु भर्तारि शुश्रूषा तया स्वर्गं जयत्युत ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.22-23

A husband should take care of his wife as she is the root cause for happiness, in this world and the world above. Therefore, it is the duty of a man that he should give proper protection to her in as much as she would be served in due manner.²² It is not only the duty of a husband to protect his wife, but it is the duty of the brother, father, kith and kins, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law etc., by providing food, clothes and ornaments as women deserve respect and protection.²³

This indicates an exalted position of women.

21. नास्ति स्त्रीणां पृथग्यज्ञो न वृतं नाप्युपोषणम् ।

पतिं शुश्रूषते येन तेन स्वर्गे महीयते ॥ - Manu.V.155

22. लोकानन्त्यं दिवः प्राप्तिः पुत्रपौत्रप्रपौत्रकैः ।

यस्मात्तस्मात्स्त्रियः सेव्याः कर्तव्याश्च सुरक्षिताः ॥ - Yājñavalkya.1.78

23. भर्तृभ्रातृपितृज्ञातिश्वश्रूश्चशुरदेवरैः ।

बन्धुभिश्च स्त्रियः पूज्या भूषणाच्छादनाशनैः ॥ - Yājñavalkya.1.82

Kanyādāna :

According to Smṛtis, the authorised persons to make kanyādāna are the father, grand-father, elder brother, any senior member of the family or the mother. The claim of father in respect of kanyādāna comes first and after him anyone of the above mentioned persons in the absence of the previous one is authorised. If none of them is available, the girl is free to make her own choice of the husband.²⁴ It is the bounden duty of a father to arrange the marriage ceremony of his daughter at a particular time.²⁵ Mahābhārata states that the custom of पाणिग्रहण or kanyādāna is not complete without the custom of सप्तपदी.²⁶ The customs of kanyādāna and सप्तपदी increases the purity of vivāha saṁskāras and the important one among all the other saṁskāras ordained by the Dharmaśāstras.

24. पिता पितामहो भ्राता सकुल्यो जननी तथा ।

कन्याप्रदः पूर्वनाशे प्रकृतिस्थः परः परः ॥

अप्रयच्छन्समाप्नोति भ्रूणहत्यामृतावृत्तौ ।

गम्यं त्वभावे दातृणां कन्या कुर्यात्स्वयंवरम् ॥ - Yājñavalkya Smṛti.1.63-64

25. जातमात्रा तु दातव्या कन्यका सदृशे वरे ।

काले दत्तासु कन्यासु पिता धर्मेण युज्यते ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.22.1

26. मनोवाग्बुद्धिसम्भाषा दत्ता चोदकपूर्वकम् ।

पाणिग्रहणमन्त्राश्च प्रथितं वरलक्षणम् ।

न त्वेषा निश्चिता निष्ठा सप्तपदी स्मृता ॥ Mbh.द्रोण.55.15-16

The origin of marriage :

The circumstances in which the institution of marriage originated, conditioned the nature of marriage rituals. The word 'marriage' has a reference to "a union of the male and the female which does not cease with the act of procreation but persists after the birth of offspring until the young are capable of supplying their own needs."²⁷ The weakness of the female was not responsible for marriage tie, because she was as strong and capable of self-defence as the male. The source of marriage is to be sought for the new-born offspring, which needs both the mother and the father for protection and food during a varying period of time. So, it appears that marriage has its source in the family, rather than the family in marriage. It was the natural desire of woman for adequate protection of her child in its helpless state of infancy that drove her to select a permanent companion in life. The desire for a son, the protection of wife and children, the need of running a home and ideal of domestic facility are duly reflected in the marriage ceremonies.

Evolution of marriage :

The Mahābhārata informs us that Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, established the institution of marriage. The whole

27. Cf. Rājābal Pāndey, *Hindu Samskāras*, Motilal Banarasidas Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1969, Page No.156

legend is described by Pāṇḍu, the father of the Pāṇḍava heroes, to convince his wife Kunti about the righteousness of the custom of niyoga which he wishes her to practice. He said that in ancient times, there were no restrictions on women. They were independent. If the women discarded their husbands and behaved as they pleased, right from their unmarried state, it was not considered irreligious; that indeed was the Dharma. This ancient Dharma is still practiced by the animals and birds who are free from sexual jealousy. The Dharma visualised by the sages still prevails in the uttarakuru. In the land of Uttarakurus²⁸ and in the city of Māhishmati,²⁹ the institution of marriage did not exist.

Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, once saw his mother being taken away by force by a brahmin in the presence of his father. But Uddālaka told his son Śvetaketu, not to be angry, as in this world, women of all varṇas are free as cows and other animals are. But Śvetaketu could not tolerate this and established a restriction for human beings. "One man can make love with one woman only. If a woman is unfaithful to her

28. यत्र नार्यः कामचारा भवन्ति । - Mbh.अनुशासन.102.26 (B)

Cf. A.S.Altekar, The position of women in Hindu Civilization, Banarasidas, Delhi, 1938, Page No.29

29. एवमग्निर्वरं प्रादात् स्त्रीणामप्रतिवारणे ।

वरिण्यस्तत्र नार्यो हि यथेष्टं विचरन्त्युत ॥ - Mbh.सभा.31.38

husband from today onwards, it will be a sin equivalent to the killing of a foetus, bringing happiness to her. A similar sin would be incurred by a husband who transgresses a wife who is faithful to him and virgin at the time of marriage. But if a wife, relied by her husband for the sake of progeny does not obey him, she also incurs the same sin." According to the Mahābhārata, it was the sage Śvetaketu who decreed that promiscuity should be supplanted by regular marriage.³⁰ This

30. अनावृताः किल पुरा स्त्रिय आसन्वरानन ।

कामचारविहारिण्यः स्वतंत्राश्चारुहासिनी ॥4॥

तासां व्युच्चरमाणानां कौमारात्सुभगे पतीन् ।

नाधर्मोऽभूद्धारारोहे स हि धर्मं पुराऽभवत् ॥5॥

प्रमाणदृष्टो धर्मोऽयं पूज्यते च महर्षिभिः ।

उत्तरेषु च रम्भोरु कुरुष्वद्यापि दृश्यते ॥

स्त्रीणामनुग्रहकरः स हि धर्मः सनातनः ॥6॥

अस्मिंस्तु लोके न चिरान्मर्यादेयं शुचिस्मिते ॥

स्थापिता येन यस्माच्च तन्मे विस्तरतः शृणु ।

बभूवोद्दालको नाम महर्षिरिति नः श्रुतम् ॥9॥

श्वेतकेतुरिति ख्यातः पुत्रस्तस्याभवन्मुनिः ।

मर्यादेयं कृता तेन धर्म्या वै श्वेतकेतुना ॥12॥

तदा प्रभृति मर्यादा स्थितेयमिति नः श्रुतम् ।

व्युच्चरन्त्याः पतिं नार्या अद्यप्रभृति पातकम् ॥44॥

भ्रूणहत्यासमं घोरं भविष्यत्यसुखावहम् ।

भार्या तथा व्युच्चरतः कौमारब्रह्मचारिणीम् ।

पतिव्रतामेतदेव भविता पातकं भुवि ॥47॥ - Mbh.आदि.125

Cf. A.S.Altekar, The position of women in Hindu Civilization, Banarasidas, Delhi, 1938, Page No.30

story of Śvetaketu, son of Uddālaka, proves that the ancient people had passed through a stage of society when such union was tolerated. The marriage as described in them was meant to be regular and permanent. The only instance of marriage by periodical contract is found in the story of Urvaśi and Purūravas in the Ṛgveda (X.59). This form of marriage, however, was not current in the Ṛgvedic times and must have been a recollection of ancient times when temporary marriages were in vogue.

The sexual relation between men and women in ancient times was not promiscuous. According to Westernmark "It is not of course impossible that among some people, intercourse between the sexes may have been almost promiscuous. But there is not a shred of genuine evidence for the notion that promiscuity even formed a general stage in the history of mankind. Although polygamy occurs among most existing people and polyandry among some, monogamy is for the most common form of human marriage. It was so among the ancient people of whom we have any direct knowledge. Monogamy is the form which is generally recognized and permitted. The greater majority of people are, as a rule, monogamous and other forms of marriages are usually modified in a monogamous direction."³¹ Almost the same observation is made

31. Cf. Rājabal Pāndey - Hindu Saṃskāras, Motilal Banarasidas Publishers Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, Page No.158

by Howard,³² on the topic "In a progressive society, monogamy is the natural and usual form of marriage. Other forms of marriage and degradation of retrogression to the primitive conditions. Promiscuity never creates the home, nor engenders those noble sentiments of self-sacrifice, and self denial that have helped to uplift the human race." Hindu culture always celebrates a regular marriage for a life-long companionship.

There are few passages in the Mahābhārata showing that a state of promiscuity may not have been an impossibility at an early period. They disclose an astounding laxity in sexual morality. Śarmiṣṭhā observes that there is no difference between one's own husband and the husband of a friend.³³

Marriage was well established in the vedic age, and it was also regarded as a social and religious duty and necessity. A vedic passage says that a person who is unmarried is unholy.³⁴ Marriage opened a new period of holy life which was to be led truly with duty consciousness.³⁵ Later, hundreds

32. Ibid

33. समावेतौ मतौ राजन् पतिः सख्याश्च य पतिः ।

समं विवाहमित्याहुः सख्या मेऽसि वृतःपतिः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.82.19

34. अयज्ञियो वा एष योऽपत्नीकः । - T.Br.2,2,6

Cf. A.S. Altekar, Position of women in Hindu Civilization, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1938, Page No.-31

35. ऋतस्य येनौ सुकृतस्य लोक । - Rg Veda.X,85,24

of youths began to enter the monastery without caring to marry and some maidens like Sulabhā in the Mahābhārata began to follow their example with a view to achieve spiritual salvation.³⁶

Marriage was made obligatory for girls to prevent abuses. As Upanayana was obligatory for boys, marriage which was its counterpart, ought to be absolutely binding on girls. The Mahābhārata informs us that it was the sage Dirghatamas, who laid it down that women ought never to remain unmarried in future.³⁷ Subhrū was the daughter of Kuṇi who remained unmarried for all her life, practising severe penance.³⁸ At the time of her death, she learnt from Nārada that she could not go to heaven because her body was not consecrated by the sacrament of marriage.³⁹ She announced that she will give half

36. साहं तस्मिन्कुले जाता भर्तर्यसति मद्विधे ।

विनीता मोक्षधर्मेषु चराम्येका मुनिव्रतम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.320.186

37. अपतीनां तु नारीणामद्यप्रभृति पातकम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.114.36

38. जगाम त्रिविदं राजन् संत्यज्येह कलेवरम् ।

सुभ्रूः सा ह्याथ कल्याणी पुण्डरीकनिभेक्षणा ॥

महतो तपसोग्रेण कृत्वाऽऽश्रममनिन्दिता ।

उपवासैः पूजयन्ती पितृन् देवांश्च सा पुरा ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.52.5-6

39. असंस्कृतायाः कन्यायाः कुतो लोकास्तवानधे ।

एवं तु श्रुतमस्माभिर्देवलोके महाव्रते ॥

ततः परमकं प्राप्तं न तु लोकास्त्वया जिताः । - Mbh.शल्य.52.12-13

of her penance to the person who marries her.⁴⁰ Then, Gālava prince Śringavat agreed to marry her, but he puts restriction on her that she should stay with him for one night.⁴¹ She agreed to this and married him, accordingly stayed with him for one night. Thus she enabled herself to go to heaven.⁴² Marriage was made obligatory for girls, but not for boys. This seems to have been the fact that an unmarried woman has to face greater risks in society than an unmarried man.

Importance of Marriage :

During ancient period, marriage developed religious consciousness among the people. It became social necessity and also a religious duty for every individual. Marriage was

40. तन्नारदवचः श्रुत्वा साब्रवीदृषिसंसदि ॥

तपसोऽर्धं प्रयच्छामि पाणिग्रहस्य सत्तम । - Mbh.शल्य.52.13-14

41. ऋषिः प्राक् लृङ्गवान्नाम समयं चेममब्रवीत् ।

समयेन तवाद्याहं पाणिं स्पृक्ष्यामि शोभने ॥

यद्येकरात्रं वस्तव्यं त्वया सह मयेति ह ।

तथेति सा प्रतिश्रुत्य तस्मै पाणिं ददौ तदा ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.52.15-16

42. तां दृष्ट्वा गालविः प्रीतो दीपयन्तीमिव श्रिया ।

उवास च क्षपामेकां प्रभाते साब्रवीच्च तम् ॥

यस्त्वया समया विप्र कृतो मे तपसां वर ।

तेनोषितास्मि भद्रं ते स्वस्ति तेऽस्तु ब्रजाम्यहम् ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.52.19-20



regarded as a sacrifice,⁴³ and one who didnot enter the married life was called "one without sacrifice." The Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa says "He indeed, is without sacrifice who has got no wife." It again adds "He himself a half man, the second half is wife."⁴⁴ When the theory of three debts⁴⁵ evolved, marriage gained greater importnace and sanctity, as it was through marriage that one could pay off one's ancestral debt, by producing children.

During the time of Smṛtis, āśrama system was divinely ordained and they prescribed that a man should marry after his student life. According to Manu, "Having spent the first fourth part of his life in the house of his Guru, the second fourth in his own house with his wife, the third part in forests, one should take sanyāsa in the fourth part, casting away every worldly tie."⁴⁶ Every individual had to pass through all these

43. अयज्ञो वा एष योऽपत्नीकः । - T.Br.ii.2.2.6

44. अथो अर्द्धो वा एष आत्मनः यत्पत्नीः - T.Br.ii.9.4.7

45. जायमानो वै ब्रह्मणस्त्रिभिर्ऋणवान् जायते ब्रह्मचर्येण ।

ऋषिभ्यो यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः प्रजया पितृभ्यः । - T.S.VI.3.10.5

46. चतुर्थमायुषो भागं वसित्वाद्यं गुरोः कुले ।

द्वितीयमायुषो भागं कृतदारो गृहे वसेत् ॥

वनेषु च विहृत्यैवं तृतीयं भागमायुषः ।

चतुर्थमायुषो भागं त्यक्त्वा सङ्गन्परिव्रजेत् ॥ - Manu.IV.1-2

four stages in his life. So, a man who didnot marry was held in low scale. According to the Mahābhārata, an unmarried man can not offer oblations to fire.⁴⁷ This shows that marriage was held in high esteem among ancient people and also during Mahābhārata period.

Generally, it has been an admitted fact that सत्य is Dharma and असत्य is Adharma. On the contrary, the Mahābhārata particularises that if we tell lie at the time of settlement of marriage of a girl, or to save one's life, then that असत्य or lie is greater than सत्य or truth.⁴⁸ This shows that marriage is an important event in the life of a girl as life is important for a man who is facing death.

Forms of Marriage :-

Hindus regarded marriage as a sacred religious union brought about by divine dispensation. It was felt that the mutual vows which the parties took in the presence of Sacred Fire sufficiently emphasised all the points that could possibly have been included in marriage ceremony. The marriage sacrament

47. अनग्नयोऽनाहुतयो न च विप्रपुरस्कृताः ।

यूयं ततो घर्षिताः स्थ मया वै पाण्डुनन्दनाः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.169.60

48. प्राणान्तिके विवाहे च वक्तव्यमनृतं भवेत् ।

अनुतेन भवेत् सत्यं सत्येनैवानृतं भवेत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.209.3

united the parties in an indissoluble union, and the husband and the wife each prayed that their love and friendship should be lasting, genuine and indissoluble.

Manu recognised eight forms of marriages for men and women of all the four varṇas, which bring heaven and hell both in *īhaloka* and *paraloka*.⁴⁹ They are Brāhma, Daiva, Ārsha, Prājāpatya, Āsura, Gāndharva, Rākṣasa and Paisāca. Among them, Paisāca marriage is strictly condemned.⁵⁰ Mahābhārata declares five types of marriages such as Brāhma, Prājāpatya, Gāndharva, Āsura and Rākṣasa. Among these five types of marriages, the first three viz. Brāhma, Prājāpatya and Gāndharva are accepted by Dharma, while the remaining two Āsura and Rākṣasa are considered as Adharma.⁵¹ The first three are fit to be followed.⁵² Daiva and Ārsha vivāhas come under Brāhma Vivāha. Rākṣasa Vivāha comes under Paisāca. Prājāpatya is also called Kṣātra Vivāha.

49. चतुर्णामपि वर्णानां प्रेत्य चेह हितांहतान् ।

अष्टाविमान् समासेन स्त्रीविवाहान्निबोधत ॥ - Manu.III.20

50. ब्रह्मोदेवैस्तथैवार्षः प्राजापत्यस्तथाऽसुरः ।

गान्धर्वो राक्षसश्चैव पैशाचश्चाष्टमोऽधमः ॥ - Manu.III.21

51. पञ्चानां तु त्रयो धर्म्या द्वावधर्म्यो युधिष्ठिर ।

पैशाचश्चासुरश्चैव न कर्तव्यो कथंचन ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.44.9

52. ब्राह्मः क्षत्रोऽथ गान्धर्व एते धर्म्या नरर्षभ ।

प्रथग् वा यदि वा मिश्राः कर्तव्या नात्र संशयः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.44.10

1) Brāhma Vivāha :

Inviting the Brāhmin bridegroom of good qualities such as education and good character and giving him the daughter in marriage is called Brāhma.⁵³

ब्राह्मणानां सतामेष ब्रह्मो धर्मो युधिष्ठिर ।

आवाह्यमावहेदेवं यो दद्यादनुकूलतः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.44.4

2) Daiva marriage :

In Daiva marriage, the girl was given to a (Ritwik) chief priest performing a yajna (sacrifice). It was given this name because the marriage was settled while a sacrifice to Devas (gods) was being performed. But this form of marriage is not approved by the Smṛti writers, as they felt that while a sacrifice to Gods were being offered, neither the sacrificer nor any of his priests should think of secular matters like possible matrimonial alliances. Here, the daughter is given with ornaments, dresses, along with gifts to her, and as Dakṣiṇā to the bridegroom was the Daiva marriage.⁵⁴

53. आच्छाद्य चार्चयित्वा च श्रुतिशीलवते स्वयम् ।

आहूय दानं कन्याया ब्राह्मो धर्मः प्रकीर्तितः ॥ - Manu.III.27

54. यज्ञे तु वितते सम्यगृत्विजे कर्म कुर्वते ।

अलंकृत्य सुतादानं दैवं धर्मं प्रचक्षते ॥ - Manu.III.28

3) Ārsā Marriage :

In this form of marriage, the bride's parents gave to the bridegroom a pair of cow and bull.⁵⁵

4) Prājāpatya Marriage :

In this form of marriage, couple were blessed to stay together following Dharma.⁵⁶ Here, the father of a girl makes arrangements for marriage.

आवाह्यमावहेदेवं यो दद्यादनुकूलतः ।

शिष्टानां क्षत्रियाणां च धर्म एष सनातनः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.44.4-5

5) Āsura Marriage :

In Āsura marriage, the guardian of the girl was given money for giving the girl in marriage. Here the husband purchases his wife by paying a resonable price for her.⁵⁷

55. एकं गोमिथुनं द्वे वा वरदादाय धर्मतः ।

कन्याप्रदानं विधिवदार्थो धर्मः स उच्यते ॥ - Manu.III.29

56. सहनौ चरतां धर्ममिति वाचानुभाष्य च ।

कन्याप्रदानमभ्यर्च्य प्राजापत्यो विधिः स्मृतः ॥ - Manu.III.30

57. ज्ञातिभ्यो द्रविणं दत्त्वा कन्यायै चैव शक्तितः ।

कन्याप्रदानं स्वच्छान्धादासुरो धर्म उच्यते ॥ - Manu.III.31

धनेन बहुधा क्रीत्वा सम्प्रलोभ्य च बान्धवान् ।

आसुराणां नृपैतं वै धर्ममाहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.44.7

The Āsura marriage supposes a recognition by society of the fact that woman has a value and has to be paid for it. It therefore, helped in the improvement of the position of women as wife. The average husband became naturally unwilling to ill-treat his wife.

There are a few cases of Āsura marriages recorded in ancient Indian tradition. In vedic times, the custom of the bride purchase was known, but not held in esteem. The son-in-law in such cases was described as Vijāmāta or a disreputable son-in-law.⁵⁸

In Mahābhārata, Pāndu's marriage with Mādri is an example of Āsura marriage in which Bhiśma had paid a large sum to Mādri's father Śalya. Śalya was feeling guilty in making the demand and put forward the excuse that it being an old religious custom in his family, he could not avoid it.

पूर्वैः प्रवर्तितं किञ्चित्कुलेऽस्मिन्नुपसत्तमैः ।

साधु वा यदि वासाधु तन्नातिऽक्रान्तुमुत्सहे ॥

58. अश्रवं हि भूरिदावत्तरा वां विजमातुरुत वा धा स्यालात् ।

अथा सोमस्य पयती युवाभ्यामिन्द्राग्नी स्तोमं जनयामि नव्यम् ॥ - Rg Veda.I.109.2

व्यक्तं तद्भवतश्चापि विदितं नात्र संशयः ।
 न च युक्तं तथा वक्तुं भवान्देहीति सत्तमः ॥
 कुलधर्मः नो वीर प्रमाणं परमं च तत् ।
 तेन त्वां न ब्रवीम्येतदसंदिग्धं वचोऽरिहन् ॥
 तं भीष्मः प्रत्युवाचेदं जनाधिपः ।
 धर्म एषः परो राजन्स्वयमुक्तः स्वयंभुवा ॥
 नात्र कश्चन दोषोऽस्ति पूर्वैर्विधिरियं कृतः ।
 विदितेयं च ते शल्य मर्यादा सादुसम्मता ॥
 इत्युक्त्वा स महातेजाः शतकुम्भं कृताकृतम् ।
 रत्नानि च विचित्राणि शल्यायादात् सहस्रशः ॥
 गजानश्वान् रथांश्चैव वासांस्याभरणानि च ।
 मणिमुक्ताप्रवालं च गाङ्गेयो व्यसृजच्छुभम् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.112.9-15

This is clear from the words of Śalya that he recognised this custom as undesirable, though he had not the moral courage to give it up. This indicates that the Āsura marriage, though not banned completely, was out of practice.

In the Mahābhārata, there is another example of Āsura marriage in which the fisherman Dāsarāja demanded that if Śantanu wanted to marry Satyawati, the son born to her should be entitled for the kingship.⁵⁹ For this shulka (price) Bhiṣma

59. अस्यां जायेत यः पुत्रः स राजा पृथिवीपते ।

त्वदूर्ध्वमभिषेक्तव्यो नान्यः कश्चन पार्थिवः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.100.56

took the vow of celibacy.⁶⁰

The Āsura marriage was considered as the sale of the daughter and was condemned in general.⁶¹ However, there are some who considered Āsura form faultless. They held that the money received for the bride should be given to her by her parents or guardians as it was her shulka, and it was an action of kindness towards her. This also was her property as stri-dhana⁶² (woman's property).

6) Gāndharva Marriage :

In this form of marriage, both the bride and the bridegroom accept to marry each other. The marriage takes place with the desire of both.⁶³

60. अब्रप्रभृति मे दाश ब्रह्मचर्यं भविष्यति ।

अपुत्रस्यापि मे लोका भविष्यन्त्यक्षया दिवि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.100.96

61. प्रसिद्धं भाषितं दाने नैषां प्रत्यायकं पुनः ।

ये मन्यन्ते क्रयं शुल्कं न ते धर्मविदो नराः ॥

न चैतेभ्यः प्रदातव्या न वोढव्या तथाविधा ।

न ह्येव भार्या क्रेतव्या न विक्रय्या कथंचन ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.44.45-46

62. प्राचेतस्य वचनं कीर्तयन्ति पुराविदः ।

यस्याः किञ्चिन्नाददते ज्ञातयो न स विक्रयः ॥

अर्हणं तत्कुमारीणामानृशंस्यतमं च तत् ।

सर्वं च प्रतिदेयं स्यात् कन्यायै तदशेषतः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.46.1-2

63. इच्छयाऽन्योन्यसंयोगः कन्यायाश्च वरस्य च ।

गान्धर्वः स तु विज्ञेयो मैथुन्यः कामसम्भवः ॥ - Manu.III.32

आत्माभिप्रेतमुत्सृज्य कन्याभिप्रेत एव यः ।
 अभिप्रेता च या यस्य तस्मै देया युधिष्ठिर ॥
 गान्धर्वमिति तं धर्मं प्राहुर्वेदविदो जनाः ।

- Mbh.अनुशासन.44.5-6

In this form of marriage, it was not the parents of the girl who settled the marriage, but both the bride and the bridegroom approached each other and settled the marriage among themselves. This is a pure and simple love-marriage. From the vedic age, the Gāndharvas were well-known. Atharva veda⁶⁴ suggests that parents usually encouraged their daughters in being forward in love affairs by giving them freedom in selection of their lovers. Mothers of such daughters thought that their daughters would win a husband for her, as they were grown-up. In the same vedic text, Gāndharva husbands are actually mentioned.⁶⁵

The Mahābhārata incurs the Gāndharva union within the group of approved marriages. Some thinkers approved that love unions ought to be commended, as they pre-suppose reciprocal attachment. Later writers disapprove both the Gandharva marriage and the self-choice by the bride

64. आ नो अग्ने सुमतिं संभलो गमेदिमां कुमारिं सह नो भगेन ।

जुष्टा वरेषु समनेषु वल्गुरोषं पत्या सौभगमस्त्वस्यै ॥ - Atharva Veda.II.36

65. जाया इद्वो अप्सरसो गन्धर्वाः पतयो यूयम् ॥ - Atharva Veda.VI.37.12

(swayamvara). In the Mahābhārata, Kaṇva the foster father of Śākuntala, says that it is the best marriage though it is performed without religious ceremonies. Because, here the marriage happens between the man and woman who desired each other.

क्षत्रियस्य हि गान्धर्वो विवाहः श्रेष्ठ उच्यते ।

सकामायाः सकामेन निर्मन्त्रो रहसि स्मृतः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.73.27

Duśyanta is also of the same opinion that Gāndharva form of marriage is the supreme among all other forms.

गान्धर्वेण च मां भीरु विवाहेनैहि सुन्दरि ।

विवाहानां हि रम्भोरु गान्धर्वः श्रेष्ठ उच्यते ॥

- Mbh.आदि.73.4

In early times, when brides were 16 or 17, at the time of their marriage, they had a more or less effective voice in the selection of their life partners. The beautiful brides selected their own husbands. Kṣatriya circles in society even conceded to grown-up brides, the exclusive right of selecting their own consorts, as is proved by the custom of swayamvara or self-choice.

The selection of husbands in cases of women like Draupati depended not upon their choice, but upon the ability of suitor to satisfy, the specific conditions previously laid

down by her father Drupada.⁶⁶ Very often it resulted in the bride being married to a person she did not like. This happened in the case of Ambā, who was carried away by Bhiśma for Vichitravirya much against her own wish. Ambā was in love with Sālva.⁶⁷ She is seen cursing her father for making her to Viryaśulkā, liable to be carried away by anybody who possessed the necessary valour. Ambā felt bitterly on the point and states that a lot of viryaśulkā maiden is none better than that of a prostitute, who has to offer herself to every customer.⁶⁸ Mahābhārata states that a woman has the right to choose her husband whom she desires. Before marriage she is called as कन्या. The word कन्या is derived from the root कम्, which means desire. As she can choose freely any of the men whom she desired as her husband in the swayamvara hall, she is called कन्या.⁶⁹

The love-marriages were arranged by the parties themselves. It was not the father, or the mother, but the bride

66. Explained under 'Polyandry'

67. मया शाल्वपतिः पूर्वं मनसाभिवृतो वरः ।

तेन चास्मि वृता पूर्व रहस्यविदिते पितुः ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.174.6

68. धिग्भीष्मं धिक् च मे मन्दं पितरं मूढचेतसम् ।

येनाहं वीर्यशुल्केन पण्यस्त्रीव प्रचोदिता ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.175.31

69. सर्वान् कामयते यस्मात् कमेर्धातोश्च भाविनि ।

तस्मात् कन्येह सुश्रोणि स्वतन्त्रा वरवर्णिनि ॥ - Mbh.वन.307.13

herself who had the right of giving herself away in marriage. Here, we can refer to the arguments of Dusyanta and Śakuntala⁷⁰ and Surya and Kunti⁷¹ when trying to win them over.

7) Rākṣasa Marriage :

In this form of marriage, the girl was carried away forcibly.⁷²

हत्त्वा धित्त्वा च शीर्षाणि रुदतां रुदतीं गृहात् ।
प्रसह्य हरणं तात राक्षसो विधिरुच्यते ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.44.8

This is also called as the Kṣātra marriage. It takes us to pre-historic times when women were regarded as prizes of war. The Rākṣasa marriage is called as the Kṣātra marriage as it was common among Kṣatriyas. The reason for this is that only Kṣatriyas were allowed to participate in wars and get the war-prizes as a sign of their victory. Thus it is clear that

70. आत्मनो बन्धुरात्मैव गतिरात्मैव चात्मनः ।

आत्मनो मित्रमात्मैव तथाऽऽत्मा चात्मनः पिता ॥

आत्मनैवात्मनो दानं कर्तुमर्हसि धर्मतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.73.7

71. न ते पिता न ते माता गुरवो वा शुचिस्मिते ।

प्रभवन्ति वरारोहे भद्रं ते श्रुणु मे वचः ॥ mbh.वन.307.12

72. हत्वा छित्त्वा च भित्त्वा च क्रोशन्तीं रुदतीं गृहात् ।

प्रसह्य कन्याहरणे राक्षसो विधिरुच्यते ॥ - Manu.III.33

Rākṣasa form of marriage was mainly recommended for the Kṣatriyas. In this marriage, the victor carried away the bride and married her. The fight was necessary because, it was regarded as a point of honour for a warrior that he should have for his wife a woman, whom he could point out as a trophy of war. This point has been emphasised by Śrī Kṛṣṇa when he proceeded to appease the anger of Baladeva and justify the conduct of Arjuna in forcibly carrying away Subhadrā, who though fallen in love with Arjuna, was about to be married to a son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Arjuna says Śrī Kṛṣṇa that he did not like Brāhma marriage, because, brides were treated there as the objects of gift like cattle. Purchase of bride, being disreputable procedure, was out of question. Since Subhadrā had fallen in love with him, to carry her away relying upon the power of his own arms was the only honourable course left open for Arjuna."⁷³ This argument gives a good glimpse of the warrior mentality, which favoured the kṣātra marriage.

It is learnt from Mahābhārata that Bhīṣma defeated the king of Kāśī and carried away his daughter Ambā as a bride

73. प्रदानमपि कन्यायाः पशुवत्कोऽनुमन्यते ।

विक्रयं चाप्यपत्यस्य कः कुर्यात्पुरुषो भुवि ॥

एतान्दोषांस्तु कौन्तेयो दृष्टवानिति मे मतिः ।

अतः प्रसह्य हतवान्कन्यां धर्मेण पाण्डवः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.220.4-5

for his brother Vichitravirya. This procedure of Bhiṣma has been later condemned in the epic by Śiṣupāla.

चेत् त्वं धर्मं विजानासि यदि प्राज्ञा मतिस्तव ।
 अन्यकामा हि धर्मज्ञा कन्यका प्राज्ञमानिना ।
 अम्बा नामेति भद्रं ते कथं सापहृता त्वया ॥
 त्वं त्वयापि हृतां भीष्म कन्यां नैषितवान् यतः ।
 भ्राता विचित्रवीर्यस्ते सतां मार्गमनुष्ठितः ॥

- Mbh.सभा.22-23

In the Mahābhārata, Bhiṣma brought Kāśi princess Ambā from the swayamvara hall forcibly when she was crying. This is an example of Rākṣasa marriage as Ambā was not willing to go with Bhiṣma as she was already in love with the king Śalya.

नास्मि प्रीतिमती नीता भीष्मेणामित्रकर्शन् ।
 बलान्नितास्मि रुदती विद्राव्य पृथिवीपतीन् ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.175.11

In this form of marriage, like Ambā, many women faced difficulties.

8) Paisācha Marriage :

According to Manu Smṛti, in this type of marriage, the man cohabits with a girl when she is sleepy or intoxicated.⁷⁴

74. सुप्तां मत्तां प्रमत्तां वा रहो यत्रोपगच्छति ।

स पापिष्ठो विवाहानां पैशाचाश्याष्टमोऽधमः ॥ - Manu.III.34

The girl lying unconscious was taken away for marriage. In this form of marriage, the bride is either duped very often by making her over drink or physically over powered by the bridegroom in order to make her yield to his passion.

With the above discussion, it is clear that there is no mention of swayamvara in the list of approved and unapproved forms of marriage. But this was very common among royal families. It is seen that swayamvara is similar to Rākṣasa form of marriage, as both are recommended for Kṣatriyas. That is why in Draupadi's swayamvara, the kings assembled there objected Arjuna, disguised as a Brāhmaṇa, taking part in swayamvara.⁷⁵ Swayamvara was the monopoly of royal families and assumed the form of a grand festival in which the invitees were introduced to the maiden by describing their names, family, qualities, bravery etc. and the girl chose one of them by garlanding him. Kunti's marriage with Pāṇdu is an example of swayamvara. Kunti's father Kuntibhoja invited kings to swayamvara to marry his daughter.⁷⁶

75. अस्मानमतिक्रम्य तृणीकृत्य च संगतान् ।

दातुमिच्छति विप्राय द्रौपदीं योषितां वराम् ॥

अवरोप्येह वृक्षं तु फलकाले निपात्यते ।

निहन्मैनं दुरात्मानं योऽप्यस्मान् न मन्यते ॥ - Mbh.आदि.188.2-3

76. ततः सा कुन्तिभोजेन राज्ञाऽऽहूय नराधिपान् ।

पित्रा स्वयंवरे दत्ता दुहिता राजसत्तम ॥ - Mbh.आदि.111.3

But Kunti choose Pāṇḍu among all other kings by garlanding him. Then her father gave Kunti in marriage with Pāṇḍu.⁷⁷ This shows that in swayamvara the marriage took place with the consent of bride and the marriage was arranged by her father. This form is continued in the classical Sanskrit literature.

But sometimes, some difficult condition was announced by the guardian of the girl for the invitees, and the one who won the competition, or one who, on his strength, carried her away defeating all others. The girl had no choice in this, as happened in case of Kāśī princesses Ambā, Ambikā and Ambālika, where Bhiṣma carried them forcibly from the swayamvara hall. The brides were called Viryaśulka (price for valour).⁷⁸

In the Mahābhārata, Kṛṣṇa told that only one type of swayamvara was recommended for Kṣatriyas. As women did not have stable mind, she could be carried away by man before swayamvara because, she could change her decision and choose someone in the swayamvara hall. By saying this, Kṛṣṇa

77. ब्रीडमाना स्रजं कुन्ती राज्ञः स्कन्धे समासजत् ।

तं निशम्य वृत्तं पाण्डुं कुन्त्या सर्वे नराधिपः ॥

यथागतं समाजमुर्गजैरश्वै रथैस्तथा ।

ततस्तस्याः पिता राजन् विवाहमकरोत् प्रभुः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.111.8-9

78. वीर्यशुल्काश्च ता ज्ञात्वा समारोप्य रथं तदा । - Mbh.उद्योग.173.14

advised Arjuna to take her sister Subhadra before swayamvara.⁷⁹ Another speciality of swayamvara was not only the marriageable person but any other person could participate in the competition on his behalf as Bhisma did for his brother Vichitravirya and carried away three Kāśi princesses.⁸⁰ Bhisma at the time of swayamvara of Kāśi princesses Ambā, Ambikā and Ambālikā, declared that swayamvara was praised by the kśatriyas. They participated in this because, they wanted to defeat the other kings and gain victory.⁸¹

It is seen that in case of the four approved forms of marriages, viz., Brāhma, Daiva, Prājāpatya and Ārśa, the union is completed from the religions point of view by bringing about the change in the Gotra of the bride at the end of Saptapadi ritual. But in Gāndharva marriage, the religious

79. स्वयंवरः क्षत्रियाणां विवाहः पुरुषंभ ।

स च संशयितः पार्थ स्वभावस्यानिमित्ततः ॥

प्रसह्य हरणं चापि क्षत्रियाणां प्रशस्यते ।

विवाहहेतुः शूराणामिति धर्मविदो विदुः ॥

स त्वमर्जुन कल्याणीं प्रसह्य भगिनीं मम ।

हर स्वयंवरे ह्यस्याः को वै वेद चिकीर्षितम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.218.21-23

80. इमाः काशिपतेः कन्या मया निर्जित्य पार्थिवान् ।

विचित्रवीर्यस्य कृते वीर्यशुल्का हता इति ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.174.2

81. स्वयंवरं तु राजन्यः प्रशंसन्त्युपयान्ति च ।

प्रमथ्य तु हतामाहुर्ज्यायसीं धर्मवादिनः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.102.16

ceremonies are not important. But even then it is praised and approved by the Smṛtis as importance is given to the desire of the bride and the bridegroom. A marriage can become happy if the marriage took place between the bride and bridegroom who desired each other.

The ceremony of marriage prevalent now a days among the Hindus is the Brāhma form of marriage, which is the best and has the sanction of scriptures behind it. Respect for this marriage is naturally entertained by every Hindu heart. The chanting of Vedic mantras while offering oblations to fire, imparting of instruction to the bride and the bridegroom and the process of seven steps while taking marriage vows, these ceremonies embody the great deal of Hindu culture. According to our Hindu religion, the practice of devotion to one wife by the husband, and to one husband by the wife is the supreme ideal.

Stri-dhana :

Stri-dhana is women's special property. Movable properties like ornaments, jewellery and other costly items were considered as stridhana.

Stri-dhana was vitally connected with the custom of bride-price (dowry). This is affectionately given to the bride by her parents. If she died leaving some children behind, her father would not object to the property as they were also his grand

children. If daughter left no issue behind, her father would claim the property back from the son-in-law, who was expected to think of a fresh marriage in due course. According to Smṛti writers in case of Āsura form of marriage, where bride price to be paid by the husband would be repaid to her parents or brothers, if she left no issues behind.⁸² Even when no bride-price was paid, the bride used to receive some wedding gifts in the vedic age. The term Pāriṇāhya was used to denote them and the vedic texts declare that the wife was to be their owner.⁸³ Women were allowed to own stridhana as it consisted of the ornaments and clothes worn on auspicious occasions by women alone. Men could have utilised them only by selling them at the time of financial crisis. Hence, it was used as *Āpaddhana*, or emergency fund. Smṛti texts declare that wives, sons and slaves could own no property; whatever they acquired would be their personal property.⁸⁴ Manu is the earliest writer to give a comprehensive description of Stridhana. He provided as much protection to the women as any civilised society can do even in the modern age. He opposed the selling of daughter and provides full rights to the women

82. अग्रजस्त्रीधनं भर्तुर्बाहुमादिषु चतुर्ष्वपि ।

दहितृणां प्रसूता चेच्छेषेषु पितृगमि तत् ॥ - Yājñavalkya.II.145

83. पत्नी वै पारीणाहस्य ईशे ॥ - T.S.VI.2.1.1

84. भार्या पुत्रश्च दासश्च त्रय एवाधनाः स्मृताः ।

यत्ते समाधिगच्छन्ति यस्य ते तस्य तद्धनम् ॥ - Manu.VIII.416

to have their property independently. He says that if somebody takes her property during her life-time, that person will go to hell.⁸⁵ He further said that every member of the society must provide protection to an issueless lady without any male protector.⁸⁶ Because of this, peace might have prevailed in the society. Manu recognises six varieties of stridhana. 1) Whatever she gets from her parents, 2) Whatever she gets from her parents at the time of departing from her parental home, 3) Gifts from the husband, 4) After marriage, gift from the father, 5) Gift from the mother, 6) Gifts from the brothers on different occasions.⁸⁷ Manu opines that nobody should deprive women of these presents after their husbands' death.⁸⁸ Early Smṛti writers were not prepared to sanction the powers over stri-dhana to women. Manu declares that, a wife ought

85. जीवन्तीनां तु तासां ये तद्वरेयुः स्वबान्धवाः ।

तान् शिष्याच्चौरदण्डेन धार्मिकः पृथिवीपतिः ॥ - Manu.VIII.29

86. वशाऽपुत्रासु चैवं स्याद्रक्षणं निष्कुलासु च ।

पतिव्रतासु च स्त्रीषु विधवास्वातुरासु च ॥ - Manu.VIII.28

87. अध्यग्न्यध्यध्यावहनिकं दत्तं च प्रीतिकर्मणि ।

भ्रातृमातृपितृप्राप्तं षड्विधं स्त्रीधनं स्मृतम् ॥ - Manu.IX.194

88. स्त्रीधनानि तु ये मोहादुपजीवन्ति मानवाः ।

नारीयनानि वस्त्रं वा ते पापा यान्त्यधोगतिम् ॥ - Manu.III.52

पत्यौ जीवति यः स्त्रीभिलरंकारो धृतो भवेत् ।

न तं भजेरन्दायादा भजमानाः पतन्ति ते ॥ - Manu.IX.200

not to alienate even her own property without her husband's sanction.⁸⁹

In course of time, however, gifts given by the husband during the married life came to be included in stri-dhana. Husband's usual expectation was that the property should pass on to his sons after the death of the wife. Manu, therefore, felt that the most equitable course was to allow both the sons and the daughters to inherit the stridhana of their mothers.⁹⁰ But Mahābhārata allows only daughter to inherit her mother's property (stridhana).⁹¹ Mahābhārata allows a son to inherit his father's property. But it says that both daughter and son are of equal importance. In spite of this, a daughter has no right in her father's property when his son is there.⁹²

89. न निर्हारं स्त्रियः कुर्युः कुटुम्बाद्बहुमध्यगात् ।

स्वकादपि हि वित्तादि स्वस्य भर्तुस्माज्ञया ॥ - Manu.IX.299

90. जनन्यां संस्थितायां तु समं सर्वे सहोदराः ।

भजेरन्मातृकं रिक्थं जनन्याश्च मनाभयः ॥ - Manu.IX.192

91. मातुश्च यौतकं यत् स्यात् कुमारीभाग एव सः ।

दौहित्र एव तद् रिक्थमपुत्रस्य पितुर्हरेत् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.45.12

92. अथ केन प्रमाणेन पुंसामादीयते धनम् ।

पुत्रवद्धि पितुस्तस्य कन्या भवितुमर्हति ॥

यथैवात्मा तथा पुत्रः पुत्रेण दुहिता समा ।

तस्यामात्मनि तिष्ठन्त्यां कथमन्यो धनं हरेत् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.45.10-11

Smrtis have laid down that any income, which a wife will acquire by her own exertions, will not be her *stri-dhana*, but will be emerged in the general income of the family. However, now-a-days, circumstances have changed. Today, women are educated and earn as a teacher, professor, scientist, lawyer, police officer or as a pilot etc. Even the uneducated women work as labourers in various fields and earn. Such earnings should be regarded as her own property. It should be left entirely to the wife. She should have the full freedom in spending this money as per her will and wish. Hence women in modern society have developed their own identity and achieved success in every field at par with men.

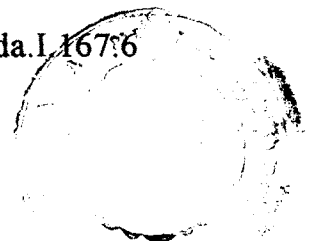
Polyandry :

Polyandry is a form of marriage where one woman marries more than one man at a time. This can be termed as बहुपतित्व.

The custom of polyandry was practically unknown in Hindu society. In the vedic marriage hymn, *Sūryā* is married to *Aśvins*; the latter, however, are not two persons but a twin deity. The marriage of lady *Rodasi* (sky) with *maruts* (storm-gods) is figurative.⁹³ It is intended to show the close

93. आस्थापयन्त युवाते युवानः शुभे निमिश्रं विदथेषु पञ्चाम् ।

अर्को यद् वा मस्तो हविष्मान् गायद् गाथं सुतसोमो दुवस्यन् ॥ - Rg.Veda.I.167:6



connection between the sky and the storm. There are some vedic passages in vedic literature where the wife is mentioned in connection with husbands in plural.⁹⁴ In the later vedic literature, it is pointed out in several places how polyandry is not permissible, though polygamy is legal.⁹⁵

According to Iravati Karve, the word 'Devar' (younger brother of the husband) derived from the root 'div' to play, signifies the relationship between the younger brother of the husband (devr) and the wife of the elder brother with whom he is in terms of playing and joking.⁹⁶ Upādhyāya is also of the same opinion, for he suggests that devar was not only looked upon as a possible husband after the death or during the absence of his brother. But what is even more important is that, he is looked upon as a second husband even during his brother's life time.⁹⁷ Thus, polyandry seems to be a feature of ancient vedic culture.

94. पुनः पतिभ्यो जायां दा अग्ने प्रजया सह ॥ - Rg.Veda.X.85.38

स्योनं पतिभ्यो वहतुं कृणु त्वम् । - Atharva Veda.XIV.1.61

95. यन्नेकां रशनां द्वयोर्यूपयोः परिव्ययति तस्मान्नेका द्वौ पती विन्दते । - T.S.6,4,3

also Cf. A.Br.III.23

96. Cf. Dhairyaabāla P. Vora, Evolution of morals in the Epics, G.R.Bhatkal, Bombay, 1959, Page No.14

97. Ibid Page No.14

According to Prof. Macdonell and Keith: "Polyandry is foreign to the vedas, as there is no passage containing any clear reference to such a custom."⁹⁸

Smṛtis nowhere contemplate the possibility of polyandry, when they discuss the rules of marriage. It is only in the Mahābhārata and some purāṇas that we come across a few stray cases of polyandry. The most well-known case is that of Draupadi, who was married to the five pāṇḍava brothers. Pāṇḍali was born in the palace of Drupada, king of Pāṇḍala. She had a brother named Dhṛṣṭadyumna. Droṇa insulted Drupada his classmate in the Gurukula. As a result, Drupada kept in mind the insult and decided to take revenge by defeating Droṇa in a battle. Brāhmins advised Drupada to conduct yāga for that purpose. He decided to conduct one yāga on a large scale and went about in search of a Yajvā (one who performs sacrifices according to vedic rites) and reached Kalmāṣapuri on the banks of the river Gangā. There, he saw a brāhmin's house where lived two sages Yāja and Upayāja. Drupada went to Yāja and after serving him, Drupada promised to give him much wealth for the yāga to be

98. Cf. Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, Vol.I. P.479

performed by him.⁹⁹ Yāja was ready to perform the Yajña. The Yāga was successfully conducted and at the end, the priest Yāja called the wife of Drupada and gave her havya¹⁰⁰ (clarified butter). Because the havya was prepared by Yāja and was offered by Upayāja the sages said that the queen would get two children. While Yāja was offering oblations to the sacrificial fire a boy with a crown on his head and bearing a sword and a bow in his hands rose from the fire. The ṛṣis present there then said that, that boy would kill Droṇa. He was named Dhr̥ṣṭadyumna.¹⁰¹ Then from the dias of the Yāga-fire emerged a beautiful lady of dazzling brilliance, who came to be known as Pāñcālī.¹⁰² It seems that Goddess Durgā herself

99. अयुतानि ददान्यष्टौ गवां याजय मां विभां ।

द्रोणवैराभिसंततं प्रह्लादयितुमर्हसि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.22

तत् कर्म कुरु मे याज वितराम्यर्बुदं गवाम् ।

तथेत्युक्त्वा तु तं याजो याज्यार्थमुपकल्पयत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.31

100. याजस्तु हवनस्यान्ते देवीमाज्ञापयत् तदा ।

प्रेहि मां राज्ञि पृषति मिथुनं त्वामुपस्थितम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.36

101. भयापहो राजपुत्रः पाञ्चालानां यशस्करः ।

हर्षविष्टास्ततश्चैतान् नेयं सेहे वसुन्धरा ॥

राज्ञः शोकापहो जात एष द्रोणवधाय वै ।

इत्युवाच महद्-भूतमदृश्यं खेचरं तदा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.42-43

102. कुमारी चापि पाञ्चाली वेदीमध्यात् समुत्थिता ।

सुभगा दर्शनीयाङ्गी स्वसितायतलोचना ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.44

took birth again in the form of Pāncālī.¹⁰³ According to the voice heard from the heaven, that lady came to be known as Kṛṣṇā and was born to destroy the Kṣatriyas.¹⁰⁴ She would work on the side of God and will cause terror to the Kauravas.¹⁰⁵

The topic of the marriage of Draupadi is first introduced by the Epic writers in the beginning of the Caitra-Ratna parva of the Ādi parva. After killing the rākṣasa Baka, the Pāṇḍavas stayed with a certain Brāhmin at Ekacakrāpura. That brahmin spoke of the forth coming swayamvara of the daughter of the king Drupada.¹⁰⁶ Vyāsa, the divine sage came to Pāṇḍava's abode in Ekacakrāpura and told them the story of Draupadi's life before her birth. He said that Draupadi was a daughter of a sage and was beautiful and virtuous. But she was unable to

103. मानुषं विग्रहं कृत्वा साक्षादमरवर्णिनी ।

नीलोत्पलसमो गन्धो यस्याः कोशात् प्रधावति ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.46

104. तां चापि जातां सुश्रोणीं वागुवाचशरीरिणी ।

सर्वयोषिद्धरा कृष्णा निनीषुः क्षत्रियान् क्षयम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.48

105. सुरकार्यमियं काले करिष्यति सुमध्यमा ।

अस्या हेतोः कौरवाणां महदुत्पत्स्यते भयम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.49

106. श्रुत्वा पुरोहितेनोक्तं पाञ्चालः प्रीतिमांस्तदा ।

घोषयामास नगरे द्रौपद्यास्तु स्वयंवरम् ॥

पुष्यमासे तु रोहिण्यां शुक्लपक्षे शुभे तिथौ ।

दिवसैः पञ्चसप्तत्या भविष्यति स्वयंवरः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.166.57

find a husband due to her actions of her previous life (purva-karma).¹⁰⁷ Through strict penance, she pleased Lord Śankara.¹⁰⁸ Lord Śankara wished to grant her a boon.¹⁰⁹ "I desire a husband who is virtuous" was the boon asked for again and again.¹¹⁰ So, Lord said that she will get five husbands in her next birth as she asked the boon of a husband five times.

पुनरेवाब्रवीद् देव इदं वचनमुत्तमम् ।

पञ्चकृत्वस्त्वया ह्युक्तः पतिं देहीत्यहं पुनः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.168.13

That girl is reborn as Drupada's daughter Kṛṣṇā. By narrating this heroic event of Draupadi, Vyāsa induces the Pāṇḍavas to visit the Pāṇcāla country as suitable persons to

107. आसीत् तपोवने काचिदृषेः कन्या महात्मनः ।

विलग्नमध्या सुश्रोणी सुभ्रूः सर्वगुणान्विता ॥

कर्मभिः स्वकृतैः सा तु दुर्भगा समपद्यत ।

नाध्यगच्छत् पतिं सा तु कन्या रूपवती सती ॥ - Mbh.आदि.168.6.7

108. ततस्तप्तुमारेभे पत्यर्थमसुखा ततः ।

तोषयामास तपसा सा किलोग्रेण शंकरम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.168.8

109. तस्याः स भगवांस्तुष्टस्तामुवाच यशस्विनीम् ।

वरं वरय भद्रं ते वरदोऽस्मीति शङ्करः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.168.9

110. अथेश्वरमुवाचेदमात्मनः सा वचो हितम् ।

पतिं सर्वगुणोपेतमिच्छामीति पुनः पुनः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.168.10

marry Kṛṣṇā whose marriage with them was almost pre-determined.¹¹¹

Pāṇḍavas went to the city of Pāncāla and took their abode in the house of a potter. They all were disguised as brāhmins. In the swayamvara hall, Drupada had placed a mighty steel bow. The king announced that his daughter would be given in marriage to him, who bent the steel bow and with it shot an arrow, through the central aperture of a revolving disc, at a target placed above.

इदं सज्यं धनुः कृत्वा सज्जैरेभिश्च सायकैः ।

अतीत्य लक्ष्यं यो वेद्वा स लब्धा मत्सुतामिति ॥

- Mbh.आदि.184.11

Then Dhṛṣṭadyumna, brother of Pāncāli announced that he who sends five arrows in succession through the hole in the wheel and unerringly hits the target shall win his sister.¹¹²

111. निर्दिष्टा भवतां पत्नी कृष्णा पार्षत्यनिन्दिता ।

पाञ्चालनगरे तस्मान्निवसध्वं महाबलाः ।

सुखिनस्तामनुप्राप्य भविष्यथ न संशयः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.168.15

112. इदं धनुर्लक्ष्यमिमे च बाणाः ।

शृण्वन्तु मे भूपतयः समेताः ।

छिद्रेण यन्त्रस्य समर्पयध्वं शरैः शतैर्व्योमचरैर्दशाद्यैः ॥

एतन्महत् कर्म करोति यो वै कुलेन रूपेण बलेन युक्तः ।

तस्याद्य भार्या भगिनी ममेयं कृष्णा भवित्री न मृषा ब्रवीमि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.184.35-36

Many noted princes including the Kauravas failed to string the bow. It was too heavy and stiff for them. Then, Arjuna, disguised as a brāhmin strung the bow with ease and hit at the target.

अर्जुनो धनुषोऽभ्याशे स्थितौ गिरिर्वाचलः ।
 स तद् धनुः परिक्रम्य प्रदक्षिणमथाकरोत् ॥
 प्रणम्य शिरसा देवीमीशानं वरदं प्रभुम् ।
 कृष्णं च मनसा कृत्वा जगृहे चार्जुनो धनुः ॥
 यत् पार्थिवै रुक्मसुनीथवक्रैः राधेयदुर्योधनशल्यशाल्वैः ।
 तदा धनुर्वेदपरैर्नृसिंहैः कृतं न सज्यं महतोऽपि यत्नात् ॥
 तदर्जुनो वीर्यवतां सदर्पस्तदैन्द्रिरिन्द्रावरजप्रभावः ।
 सज्यं च चक्रे निमिषान्तरेण शरांश्च जग्राह दशार्धसंख्यान् ॥
 विव्याध लक्ष्यं निपपात तच्च छिद्रेण भूमौ सहसातिविद्धम् ।
 ततोऽन्तरिक्षे बभूव नादः समाजमध्ये च महान् निनादः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.187.17-21

Thus, Arjuna won Draupadi in the swayamvara. Draupadi accepted Arjuna as her husband and all the Pāṇdavās went with her to their hut in sheer joy and called out for their mother Kunti to see the wonderful alms (bhikṣā) they had brought that day.¹¹³ Their mother who was inside the hut without even giving a look to what was described as bhikṣā, told them to

113. गत्वा तु तां भार्गवकर्मशालां पार्थे पृथां प्राप्य महानुभावौ ।

तां यज्ञसेनीं परमप्रतीतौ भिक्षेत्यथवेदयतां नराग्र्यौ ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.1

divide it in equal proportions and enjoy it. Kunti was pained to find her well-meant direction should result in a polyandrous marriage.¹¹⁴ Realising her mistake, Kunti went to Yudhiṣṭhira and asked him to find out a way.¹¹⁵ Kunti's request clearly indicates that she also considers the custom of polyandry as adharmā indicating an absence of such a tradition in those days.

Yudhiṣṭhira acted as if he had not heard Kunti's speech and turned to Arjuna and asks him to get married to Kṛṣṇā because she was his prize.¹¹⁶ But Arjuna was reluctant to get married prior to his elder brother and to act sinfully according

114. कुटीगता सा त्वनवेक्ष्य पुत्रान् प्रोवाच भुङ्क्तेति समेत्य सर्वे ।

पश्चाच्च कुन्ती प्रसीमीक्ष्य कृष्णां कष्टं मया भाषितमित्युवाच ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.2

115. इयं तु कन्या द्रुपदस्य राज्ञः

तवानुजाभ्यां मयि संनिविष्टा ।

यथोचितं पुत्र मयापि चोक्तं

समेत्य भुङ्क्तेति नृप प्रमादात् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.4

116. त्वया जिता फाल्गुन यज्ञसेनी

त्वयैव शोभिष्यति राजपुत्री ।

प्रज्वाल्यतामग्निमित्रसाह

गृहाण पाणिं विधिवत् त्वमस्याः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.7

to the belief of those days.¹¹⁷ Yudhiṣṭhira proposed her marriage with all the five brothers seeing that all were attracted by her.¹¹⁸ In defence of his action, he put forth that obedience to the mother was the most meritorious duty and cited the example of Jatila¹¹⁹ of ancient times and said that they should follow the example of their ancestors.

Drupada was shocked to hear this proposal¹²⁰ which according to him was against popular custom¹²¹ as well as the

117. मां मा नरेन्द्र त्वमधर्मभाजं

कृथा न धर्मोऽयमशिष्टदृष्टः ।

भवान् निवेश्यः प्रथमं ततोऽयं

भीमो महाबाहुरचिन्त्यकर्मा ॥

अहं ततो नकुलोऽनन्तरं मे ।

पश्चादय सहदेवस्तरखी

वृकोदरोऽहं च यमौ च राज-

-त्रियं च कन्या भवतो नियोज्याः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.8-9

118. अब्रवीत् सहितान् भ्रातृन् मिथोभेदभयान्नृपः ।

सर्वेषां द्रौपती भार्या भविष्यति हि नः शुभा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.190.16

119. श्रूयते हि पुराणेऽपि जटिला नाम गौतमी ।

ऋषीनध्यासितवती सप्त धर्मभृतां वरा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.195.14

120. सर्वेषां महिषी राजन् द्रौपदी नो भविष्यति ।

एवं प्रव्याहृतं पूर्वं मम मात्रा विशापते ॥ - Mbh.आदि.194.23

121. एषः नः समयो राजन् रत्नस्य सह भोजनम् ।

न च तं हातुमिच्छामः समयं राजसत्तम ॥ - Mbh.आदि.194.25

vedas and said that such an action would be an adharmā.¹²² He reproached Yudhiṣṭhira saying that he should not even think that way. "A man could marry more than one wife but not so a woman."

एकस्य बह्वो विहिता महिष्यः कुरुनन्दन ।

नैकस्याः बहवः पुंसः श्रूयन्ते पतयः क्वचित् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.194.27

Drupada was willing to give Draupadi in marriage to any one of the five brothers of Pāṇḍavas, but not all of them. But Yudhiṣṭhira justified it only on the convenient excuse of family tradition.¹²³ Then sage Vyāsa assured him and narrated a boon from Śankara in Draupadi's previous birth and convinced him that Draupadis' marriage was ordained by God.¹²⁴ Thus, Drupada, on seeing all this, was fully convinced that there was nothing objectionable in bestowing Draupadi on all the five brothers. It was added by Vyāsa that Draupadi would regain

122. अधर्मोऽयं मम मतो विरुद्धो लोकवेदयोः ।

न ह्येका विद्यते पत्नी बहूनां द्विजसत्तम ॥ - Mbh.आदि.195.7

123. सूक्ष्मो धर्मो महाराज नास्य विद्वो वयं गतिम् ।

पूर्वेषामानुपूर्व्येण यातं वर्तमानुयामहे ॥ - Mbh.आदि.194.29

124. पञ्चानां विहिता पत्नी कृष्णा पार्षत्यनिन्दिता । - Mbh.आदि.196.51

virginity after each marriage.¹²⁵ It is thus clearly seen that Vyāsa satisfied Drupada only by miracle and tale-telling.

Nārada, who was present there, advised that Draupadi should be the wife of one brother only for one year turn by turn, and during that if someone else disturbed their privacy, he had to undergo an exile, for twelve years¹²⁶ as later Arjuna had to do.¹²⁷

The Ādi parva refers to the polyandrous marriage of Draupadi as inhuman. So does Karna in sabhāparva, where he refers to Draupadi as a harlot serving five men at a time.¹²⁸

125. क्रमेण चानेन नराधिपात्मजा वरास्त्रियस्ते जगृहुस्तदा करम् ।

अहन्यहन्युत्तमरूपधारिणो महारथाः कौरववंशवर्धनाः ॥

इदं च तत्राद्भुतरूपमुत्तमं जगाद देवर्षिरतीतमानुषम् ।

महानुभावा किल सा सुमध्यमा बभूव कन्यैव गते गतेऽहनि ॥

- Mbh.आदि.197.13-14

126. द्रौपद्या नः सहासीनानन्योन्य योऽभिदार्शयेत् ।

स नो द्वादश वर्षाणि ब्रह्मचारी वने वसेत् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.211.29

127. धर्मराजमुवाचेदं व्रतमादिश मे प्रभो ।

समयः समतिक्रान्तो भवत्संदर्शने मया ॥

वनवासो गमिष्यामि समयो ह्येषः नः कृतः । - Mbh.आदि.212.27-28

128. एको भर्ता स्त्रिया देवैर्विहितः कुरुनन्दन ।

इयं त्वनेकवशगा बन्धकीति विनिश्चिता ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.35

Thus, the fact that Draupadi's marriage is rather an exception than a rule. Polyandry as an institution is absolutely out-dated and not only that but even the idea of polyandry is shocking.

According to Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, all the five brothers were born as a fraction of Indra and they were representatives of Indra only. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa says that very often there was a war between gods and demons and it was customary with the gods to incarnate themselves on the earth in the human form. It was really the splendour of Indra which Dharmarāja established in the womb of Kuntī. Then again the wind-god put the same essence from Indra in the womb of Kuntī and Bhīma was born. Indra incarnated himself in the form of Arjuna with the half of his potency. The Aśvini Kumāras put the same potency of Indra in the womb of Mādrī and the twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva took birth from Mādrī. So, really speaking, all the five brothers were one and the same and Draupadi, who was an incarnation of Sachi, was married only to Indra and nobody else. According to this Purāṇa, Kuntī had all the five sons from Indra only. This episode of Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa white washes all the blemishes of Draupadi that she was the wife of five husbands.

Mādhavi, daughter of Yayāti, is another example of woman marrying four different kings, which is a polyandrous type of

marriage. Viśvāmitra was immensely pleased with Gālava for the hospitality rendered to him and allowed him to go away free without any gurudakṣiṇa when his education was over. Gālava wanted to give some dakṣiṇā but Viśvāmitra refused to accept it. Gālava insisted on giving and then Viśvamitrā asked him to give eight hundred horses each with one of its ears black. Gālava was shocked to hear this and roamed about in search of horses of the type specified. Garuḍa taking pity on his sad plight, took him to the palace of Yayāti. Hearing the story of Gālava, Yayāti sent his daughter Mādhavi with Gālava saying that if she was given in marriage to any king he would give him the eight hundred horses of the type he required.

Gālava took Mādhavi to Haryaśva, a king of the Ikśvāku line of kings. Haryaśva was doing penance at that time to obtain a child. Gālava said that Haryaśva would get a son of Mādhavi and he should therefore accept Mādhavi and give him in return 800 horses each with one ear black.¹²⁹ But Haryaśva was having only 200 horses of the type specified. Finding this difficulty, Mādhavi said to Gālava that she had a boon from a brahmavādi sage that she would remain a maiden even after

129. एकतः श्यामकर्णानां शतान्यष्टौ प्रयच्छ मे ।

हयानां चन्द्रशुभ्राणां देशजानां वपुष्मताम् ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग. 116.5

delivery.¹³⁰ So she suggested him to give her in marriage to Haryaśva and get two hundred horses. After giving birth to a son, she would be given in marriage to another and thus by giving her to four kings, Gālava could get the eight hundred horses he required.¹³¹ Thus, Mādhavi was given in marriage to Haryaśva, Divodāsa, Rājā of Kāśi and to Uśīnara, king of Bhoja. Gālava thus got six hundred horses and finally, Mādhavi was given in marriage to Viśvāmitra with six hundred horses.

Mādhavi's marriage with four persons is also an example of polyandry, but the husbands are not the brothers as in case of Draupadi, where Pāndavas were brothers.

The Duties of Husband and Wife :

After marriage, women received a good treatment in her new home from her elders and other family members. Early in the history of our civilization, brides naturally received affectionate and respectful treatment in their new homes. The vedic marriage hymn lays down that the bride should

130. एतच्छ्रुत्वा तु सा कन्या गालवं वाक्यमब्रवात् ।

मम दत्तौ वरः कश्चित् केतचित् ब्रह्मवादिना ॥

प्रसूत्यन्ते प्रसूत्यन्ते कन्यैव तेवं भविष्यसि ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.116.10-11

131. नृपेभ्यो हि चतुर्भ्यस्ते पूर्णान्यष्टौ शतानि मे ।

भविष्यन्ति तथा पुत्रा मम चत्वार एव च ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.116.12

immediately take the reins of the household from her elderly relations.¹³² Her views were usually to prevail in the household management.¹³³ Probably, these statements refer to the wife of the eldest son in the family, who has to look after his parents in their old age, and also his unmarried brothers and sisters in the joint family.

When the child and illiterate brides became the order of the day, the tone of the treatment which was given to them by their elders in their new homes began to change. They had ceased to be queens in their new households. The marriage came to be regarded as the bride's upanayana. The husband was regarded as her preceptor and the stay at his place as the counterpart of the stay at his teacher's house (Gurukula). So, like the teacher, the husband also was endowed by later writers.¹³⁴

The treatment which a wife receives from her husband is

132. सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवेषु । - Rg Veda.X.85.46

133. यथा सिन्धुर्नदीनां साम्राज्यं सुषुवे वृषा ।

एवा त्वं सम्राज्ञ्येधि पत्युरस्तं पुरेत्य च ॥ - Atharva Veda.XIV.1,43

134. भार्या पुत्रश्च दासश्च प्रेष्यो भ्राता च सोदरः ।

प्राप्तापराधास्ताढ्याः स्यू रज्जा वेणुदलेन वा ॥

पृष्ठतस्य शरीरस्य नोत्तमांगे कथंचन ।

अतोऽन्यथा प्रहरन्प्रातः स्याद्राजकिल्बिषम् ॥ - Manu.VIII.299-300

more vital for the wife's happiness. According to the Mahābhārata, father, brother and son can give some happiness to a woman.

मितं ददाति हि पिता मितं भ्राता मितं सुतः ।

- Mbh.शान्ति.148.6

But, only husband can give her unlimited happiness. So for a woman after marriage, nobody can protect her as her husband and no happiness equals him. So, a woman should leave everything including wealth for him.

अमितस्य हि दातारं भर्तारं का न पूजयेत् ।

नास्ति भर्तृसमो नाथो नास्ति भर्तृसमं सुखम् ।

विसृज्य धनसर्वस्वं भर्ता वै शरणं स्त्रियाः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.148.7-8

Since, Indo-Iranian times the husband and the wife were regarded as the joint owners of the household. The word for the couple, dampati etymologically means the joint owners of the house. In the Hindu household, the husband is the senior partner and the wife is under his general guidance. So, a wife should be always obedient to her husband. The Vedic marriage ritual, however, doesnot enjoin the duty of obedience upon the wife. Both parties take the same vows.¹³⁵

135. Cf. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1938, Page No. 92-93

Though, the supreme authority was clearly vested in the husband, the wife's position was one of the honourable subordinations. In the vedic and epic society, we find that the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. It was recognised that the wife was the ornament of the house. Infact, the wife herself was the home.¹³⁶ The home management was under her direct charge and ordinarily, her views prevailed there.¹³⁷ It was she who used to rouse the servants and assign them their proper duties, and thus arrange for the normal running of the household.

There should be an absolute identity in the relations between the husband and the wife in their material and moral interests. This principle was recognised in the vedic age and is approved by later Dharmaśāstra writers like Manu and Āpastamba.¹³⁸ The husband and the wife are the complements of each other. "Man is only one half" and he is not complete till he is united with a wife and gives birth to children.¹³⁹ A

136. जायेदस्तं मधवन्सेदु योनिः । - Rg Veda.III.53,4

137. यथा सिन्धुर्नदीनां साम्राज्यं सुषुवे वृषा ।

एवा त्वं सम्राज्योधि पत्युरस्तं परेत्य च ॥ - Atharva Veda.XIV.1,43

138. जायापत्योर्न विभागे दृश्यते । पाणिग्रहणादि सहत्वं कर्मसु । तथा पुण्यफलेषु द्रव्यपरग्रिहेषु च ।

Cf. A.S. Altekar, Position of Women in Hindu Civilization, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1938, Page No.95

139. अर्धो ह वैष आत्मनस्तस्माच्चावज्जायां न विन्दते

अर्धा ह तावद्भवति अथ यदैव जायां विन्दतेऽथ प्रजायते तर्हि सर्वो भवति ।

- Ś.Br.V.1,6,10

wife is considered as a better half of a man. She is a good of her husband, and a root cause of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. She is the only way for a man who wants to succeed in his life.

अर्धं भार्या मनुष्यस्य भार्या श्रेष्ठतमः सखा ।

भार्या मूलं त्रिवर्गस्य भार्या मूलं तरिष्यतः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.41

Hindus believed that the creator Brahmā divided himself into two. Among these two, one half became man and another half woman. So, couples are considered as one body with one soul.¹⁴⁰ The wise have observed that the husband is identical with the wife and vice versa.¹⁴¹ It was therefore natural that the happiness of each should be regarded as depending upon the other. If there was complete harmony between the two, the house would be a heaven, if there was discord, it would be a hell.¹⁴² Wife is the keystone of the arch of the husband's happiness. The house may be full of sons, daughters and daughters-in-law; but it is quite empty to a person if his wife is not there to supervise over it.

140. द्विधा कृत्वात्मनो देहमर्धेन पुरुषोऽभवत् ।

अर्धेन नारी तस्यां स विराजमसृजत् प्रभुः ॥ - Manu.I.32

141. विप्राः प्राहुस्तथा चैतद्यो भर्ता सा स्मृतांगना । - Manu.IX.45

142. यदा भार्या च भर्ता च परस्परवशानुगौ ।

तदा धर्मार्थकामानां त्रयाणामपि संगतम् ॥ - Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, 67-71

पुत्रपौत्रवधूभृत्यैराकीर्णमपि सर्वतः ।

भार्याहीनगृहस्थस्य शून्यमेव गृहं भवेत् ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.144.5

She is the surest solace to the husband, however serious his worries and miseries may be.¹⁴³ She is the only friend, who never forsakes him in adversity. He may be in a forest, still his comfort is assured if his wife is by his side; in fact a home without wife is a forest.

न गृहं गृहमित्याहुर्गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते ।

गृहं तु गृहिणीहीनं कान्तारादतिरिच्यते ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.144.6

Without his wife, a man can not go to heaven either; so at the time of the symobolical ascent to heaven in the sacrificial ritual, he has to wait till his wife comes to accompany him.¹⁴⁴

Duties of a Husband :

Wife is given to a man not by his own will but by God or destiny. So, it is the duty of a man to protect his wife the

143. न च भार्यासमं किञ्चिद्विद्यते भिषजां मतम् ।

औषधं सर्वदुःखेषु सत्यमेतदब्रवीमि ते ॥ - Mbh.वन.61.29

144. स रोक्ष्यञ्जायामामन्त्रयते, जाये एहि स्वो रोहावेति ।

रोहावेत्याह जाया । तस्माज्जायामामन्त्रयते । अर्धो ह वैष आत्मनो यज्जाया ।

- Ś.Br.V.2,1,10

way, by which Gods will be happy.¹⁴⁵ The husband should treat his wife as his dearest friend. Aitareya Brāhmaṇa states that, wife is the companion friend of a man.¹⁴⁶ Mahābhārata is also of the same opinion.

एवमेतद् यथाऽऽत्थ त्वं दमयन्ति सुमध्यमे ।
नास्ति भार्या समं मित्रं नरस्यार्तस्य भेषजम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.61.30

अर्धं भार्या मनुष्यस्य भार्या श्रेष्ठतमः सखा ।
भार्या मूलं त्रिवर्गस्य भार्या मूलं तरिष्यतः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.41

सखायः प्रविविक्तेषु भवन्त्येताः प्रियंवदाः ।
पितरो धर्मकार्येषु भवन्त्यार्तस्य मातरः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.43

Man without his wife is incomplete. The husband must, however, put up with her. To maintain and support his wife is the most sacred duty of the husband, which must be discharged at all costs; otherwise, he will have no right at all to be called a husband. A man should treat his wife as a mother, as she gives birth to a son who is his soul.¹⁴⁷ Above

145. देवदत्तां पतिर्भायां विन्दते नेच्छयात्मनः ।

तां साध्वीं बिभ्रयान्नित्यं देवानां प्रियमाचरन् ॥ - Manu.IX.95

146. सखा ह जाया - A.Br.VII,3,13

147. आत्माऽऽत्मनैव जनितः पुत्र इत्युच्यते बुधैः ।

तस्माद् भार्या नरः पश्येन्मातृवत् पुत्रमातरम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.74.48

all, he must be true to his vow of conjugal fidelity; its violation is the greatest sin he can commit.¹⁴⁸

Duties of Wife :

The wife, on her part has corresponding duties and obligations. In Atharva Veda, the duties of a woman (wife) are indicated.¹⁴⁹ In ancient India, a woman was devoted to her husband and was not doing anything against the will of her husband. Her chastity was the most important. She was thinking of the welfare of her husband's family and was taking part in sacrificial ceremonies with him for the well-being of the family. By giving birth to a good son, she was rendering her duty towards her motherland.

148. अन्योन्यस्याव्यभिचारो भवेदामरणान्तिकः ।

एष धर्मः समासेन ज्ञेयः स्त्रीपुंसयोः परः ॥ - Manu.IX.101

149. शुद्धाः पूता योषितो यज्ञिया इमा ब्रह्मणां हस्तेषु प्रपृथक्

यत्काम इदमभिषिञ्चामि वोहमिन्द्रो मरुत्वान्त्स ददातु तन्मे ॥ - Atharva Veda.VI.122.5

इदं राष्ट्रं पिपृहि सौभगाय विश्व एनमनुमदन्तु देवाः ॥ - Ibid.VII.35.1

एवा भगस्य जुष्टेयमस्तु नारी संप्रिया पत्याविराधयन्ती ॥ - Ibid.II.36.4

जाया पत्ये मधुमतीं वाचं वदतु शान्तिवाम् ॥ - Ibid.III.30.2

प्रजावती वीरसूर्देवृकामा स्योनेममग्निं गार्हपत्यं सपर्या ॥ - Ibid.XIV.2.18

अधि द्वयोरधा उक्थ्यं वचो यतस्त्रुचा मिथुना या सपर्यतः ।

असंयत्तो व्रते ते क्षेति पुष्यति भद्रा शक्तिर्यजमानाय सुन्वते ॥- Ibid.XX.25.3

सं वां भगासो अग्नत सं चित्तानि समु व्रता ॥ - Ibid.II.30.2

In the Atharva-veda, it is said that the women were the treasure-house of happiness.¹⁵⁰ According to the Mahābhārata, a wife must be true to her husband in her marriage vows and lead the life of an ideal Pativrata. She promotes her husband's happiness by giving birth to sons.

भार्यायां जनितं पुत्रमादर्शेष्विव चाननम् ।
ह्लादते जनिता प्रेक्ष्य स्वर्गं प्राप्येव पुण्यकृत् ॥
दह्यमाना मनोदुःखैर्व्याधिभिश्चातुरा नराः ।
ह्लादन्ते स्वेषु दारेषु धर्मार्ताः सलिलेष्विव ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.49-50

So, a person should marry a good woman with good character.¹⁵¹ Woman gets happiness after suffering pain.¹⁵² Neither the father, nor the mother, neither a son nor a friend can do for a woman what a husband will. Her real happiness is centered in her husband.

There is no sacrificial ritual to be performed alone and no vow or fast is necessary. A lady who serves and nurses her husband faithfully, attains the heaven and commands respect

150. सुमङ्गली प्रतरणी गृहाणां सुशेवा पत्ये श्वशुराय शंभूः । - Atharva Veda.XIV.2.26

151. एतस्मात् कारणाद् राजन् पाणिग्रहणमिष्यते ।

यदाप्नोति पतिभार्यामिहलोके परत्र च ॥ - Mbh.आदि.74.47

152. सुखं सुखेनेह न जातु लभ्यं दुःखेन साध्वी लभते सुखानि ।

सा कृष्णमाराधय सौहृदेन प्रेम्णा च नित्यं प्रतिकर्मणा च ॥ - Mbh.वन.234.4

there too.¹⁵³ The average Hindu wife will say like Sāvitri that if separated from her husband, she will desire neither pleasure nor prosperity nor heaven; she will prefer death to separation from him.¹⁵⁴ This means that a Pativrata woman can not live without her husband.

That wife is considered as साध्वी woman who is well-versed in household work, who has a son, who loves her husband more than her life, and who is Pativrata.¹⁵⁵ Wife is considered as a उपमित्र of a man. It is the first and foremost duty of a Pativrata woman to keep her house clean and to worship God, cow and Brāhmin. Because Laxmi will reside in such houses.¹⁵⁶ Laxmi will not stay in those houses of

153. नास्ति स्त्रीणां पृथग्यज्ञो न वृतं नाप्युपोषितम् ।

पतिं शुश्रूयते येन स्वर्गे महीयते ॥ - Manu.V.155

154. न कामये भर्तृविनाकृता सुखं

न कामये भर्तृविनाकृता दिवम् ।

न कामये भर्तृविनाकृता श्रियम्

न भर्तृहीना व्यावसामि जीवितुम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.53

155. सा भार्या या गृहे दक्षा सा भार्या या प्रजावती ।

सा भार्या या पतिप्राणा सा भार्या या पतिव्रता ॥ - Mbh.आदि.74.40

156. वसामि स्त्रीषु कान्तासु देवद्विजपरासु च ।

विशुद्धगृहभाण्डासु गोधान्याभिरतासु च ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.11.10

women who will not keep her house clean.¹⁵⁷ Hence, we can say that a good wife is a Laxmi of the house. So, a man who has a good wife is called श्रीमान्.

भार्यावन्तः क्रियावन्तः सभार्या गृहमेधिनः ।

भार्यावन्तः प्रमोदन्ते भार्यावन्तः श्रियान्वितः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.42

नित्यं निवसते लक्ष्मीः कन्यकासु प्रतिष्ठिता ।

शोभना शुभयोग्या च पूज्या मङ्गलकर्मसु ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.22

कन्या महालक्ष्मीः सर्वलोकस्य मङ्गलम् ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.22

A Pativrata woman should always be faithful to her husband and soft spoken. Otherwise, a man's house will be a forest.¹⁵⁸ According to Manu Smṛti - after the demise of the husband, a lady is required to observe complete celibacy. If she does it, she attains the heaven even if she has no son.¹⁵⁹

157. प्रकीर्णभाण्डामनवेक्ष्यकरिणीं

सदा च भर्तुः प्रतिकूलवादिनीम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.11.11

158. यस्य भार्या गृहे नास्ति साध्वी च प्रियवादिनी ।

अरण्यं तेन गन्तव्यं यथारण्यं तथा गृहम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति,144.17

159. मृते भर्तरि साध्वी स्त्री ब्रह्मचर्ये व्यवस्थिता ।

स्वर्गं गच्छत्यपुत्रापि यथा ते ब्रह्मचारिणः ॥ - Manu.V.160

Even motivated by desire of having a son, if a lady transgresses the rule and over-steps the husband, she is condemned in this world and falls from heaven.¹⁶⁰

A Pativrata woman should always forgive her husband if he does mistakes.¹⁶¹ She should always serve him by preparing tasty and pure food timely and she should keep utensils clean and neat. She should offer every kind of hospitality to him. This is clearly expressed by Draupadi to Satyabhāma in the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata.

क्षेत्राद् वनाद् वा ग्रामाद् वा भर्तारं गृहमागतम् ।
अभ्युत्थायाभिनन्दामि आसनेनोदकेन च ॥
प्रमृष्टभाण्डा मृष्टान्ना काले भोजनदायिनी ।
संयता गुप्तधान्या च सुसम्मृष्टनिवेशिना ॥

- Mbh.वन.233,25-26

A साध्वी स्त्री should not do anything which her husband does not want or like.¹⁶² A lady, desirous of her husband's abode,

160. अपत्यलोभाद्वा तु स्त्री भर्तारमतिवर्तते ।

सेह निन्दामवाप्नोति पतिलोकाच्च हीयते ॥ - Manu.V.161

161. क्षान्त्या पतिकृते नार्यः पातिवृत्यं वृजन्ति ताः । - Mbh.आदि.74.124

162. पापानुगास्तु पापास्ताः पतीमुपसृजन्त्युत ।

न जातु विप्रियं भर्तुः स्त्रिया कार्यं कथंचन ॥ - Mbh.वन.233.17

does not do any act unapproved by her husband.¹⁶³ According to Draupadi, a wife should live under the protection of her husband, and that is considered as Sanātana Dharma. Husband is the only God for her and her only way. Other than her husband, no protection is there for a woman.

पत्याश्रमो हि धर्मो मतः स्त्रीणां सनातनः ।

स देवः सा गतिर्नान्या तस्य का विप्रियं चरेत् ॥

- Mbh.वन.233.37

"A chaste woman liberates thousands of generations. According to Skanda Purāṇa the husband of a pativrata woman gets freed from all sins. He is not at all bound to enjoy or suffer the fruits of the good or evil acts due to the splendour of vows observed by the sati. Free from the shakles of his past actions, he enjoys eternally along with his wife in the abode of Lord Viṣṇu."¹⁶⁴

In the Mahābhārata, Draupadi explains to Satyabhāma how a wife should be. She said "I am always careful not to permit

163. पापीग्रहस्य साध्वी स्त्री जीवतो वा मृतस्य वा ।

पतिलोकमभीप्सन्ती नाचरेत्किञ्चित्प्रियम् ॥ - Manu.V.156

164. पुरुषाणां सहस्रं च सती स्त्री समुद्धरेत् ।

पतिः पतव्रितानां च मुच्यते सर्वपातकान् ॥

नास्ति तेषां कर्मभोगः सतीनां व्रततेजसा ।

तया सार्द्धं निष्कर्मो मोदते हरिमन्दिरे ॥ - Skandapurāṇa

any wrong to slip from my lips. Like uncultured woman, I do not stand here and there. Like other shameless women, I do not cast my eyes every where. I do not sit on a wrong and improper place. I always try to avoid evil conduct and am quite alert that even my walking may not be mannerless. I scrupulously follow even the hints of my husbands. My husbands are lustrous like sun and fire and at the same time soothing like moon. They are all great warriors and capable of killing their enemies through their glances only. They are terribly strong and splendrous. I always keep myself busy in serving them.¹⁶⁵ Draupadi was sincere and faithful to each of her five husbands. On account of her vow and swearing the great epic Mahābhārata develops into a great story containing morals and guidance for human life.

The woman who does not keep her husband happy, is not a woman. If her husband is happy, then all Gods will be happy and bless her.¹⁶⁶ That woman perishes who does not keep her

165. दुर्व्याहताच्छङ्कमाना दुःस्थितात् दुःखेक्षितात् ।

दुरासिताद दुर्ब्राजिदादिङ्किताध्यासितादपि ॥

सूर्यवैश्वानर समान् सोमकल्पान् महारथान् ।

सेवे चक्षुर्हणः पार्थानुग्रवीर्यप्रतापिनः ॥ - Mbh.वन.233.21-22

166. न सा स्त्री ह्यभिमन्तव्या यस्यां भर्ता न तुष्यति ।

तुष्टे भर्तारि नारीणां तुष्टाः स्युः सर्वदेवताः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.145.3

husband happy.¹⁶⁷

In the Anuśāsana parva of the Mahābhārata, Śāndili, a very chaste devi living in Devaloka, once thought Sumanas, the Kekaya princess the duties of a chaste woman. She never used harsh words while dealing with her husband. On the contrary, she was more obedient to him.¹⁶⁸ As a chaste woman, she always obeyed the orders of her parents-in-law. She always worshipped Gods, ancestors and brāhmaṇas.¹⁶⁹ When her husband was to go to a distant place for some important work, she used to perform poojas for the welfare of her husband and success in his efforts to achieve the desired goals.¹⁷⁰ She kept the family secrets as confidential. She maintained the cleanliness of the surroundings.¹⁷¹ It was her opinion that any

167. भस्मीभवति सा नारी यस्य भर्ता न तुष्यति ।

इति संचिन्त्य दुःखार्ता भर्तारं दुःखितं तदा ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.145.5

168. अहितानि च वाक्यानि सर्वाणि पुरुषाणि च ।

अप्रमत्ता च भर्तारं कदाचिन्नाहमब्रवम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.123.9

169. देवतानां पितृणां च ब्राह्मणानां च पूजने ।

अप्रमत्ता सदा युक्ता श्वश्रूश्चशुरवर्तिनी ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.123.10

170. प्रवासं यदि मे याति भर्ता कार्येण केनचित् ।

मङ्गलैर्बहुभिर्युक्ता भवामि नियता तदा ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.123.16

171. नायासयामि भर्तारं कुटुम्बार्थेऽपि सर्वदा ।

गुप्तगुह्या सदाचास्मि सुसम्मृष्टिनिवेशना ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.123.19

woman who follows these policies in her life would be worthy to be worshipped like Arundhati.¹⁷²

The Anuśāsana parva of the Mahābhārata narrates the story of Oghavati, wife of Sudarśana, who decided to succeed in his life by following Gr̥hastha dharma, that is to welcome the guest.¹⁷³ Oghavati, followed the way of her husband and treated well the brahmin in the absence of her husband.¹⁷⁴ She offered herself to the brahmin as per his wish.¹⁷⁵

172. इमं धर्मपथं नारी पालयन्ती समाहिता ।

अरुन्धतीव नारीणां स्वर्गलोके महीयते ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.123.20

173. येन येन च तुष्येत नित्यमेव त्वयातिथिः ।

अप्यात्मनः प्रदानेन न ते कार्या विचारणा ॥

एतद् व्रतं मम सदा हृदि सम्परिवर्तते ।

गृहस्थानां च सुश्रोमि नातिथेर्विद्यते परम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.2.43-44

174. इत्युक्ता तेन विप्रेण राजपुत्री यशस्विनी ।

विधिना प्रतिजग्राह वेदोक्तेन विशाम्पते ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.2.51

175. तामब्रवीत् ततो विप्रो राजपुत्रीं सुदर्शनाम् ।

त्वया ममार्थः कल्याणि निर्विशङ्कैतदाचर ॥

यदि प्रमाणं धर्मस्ते गृहस्थाश्रमसम्मतः ।

प्रदानेनात्मनो राज्ञि कर्तुमर्हसि मे प्रियम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.2.53-54

सा तु राजसुता स्मृत्वा भर्तुर्वचनमादितः ।

तथेति लज्जमाना सा तमुवाच द्विजर्षभम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.2.56

Lopāmudra was pativrata woman who married sage Agastya. She was brought up in a royal family and always wore ornaments. But after marriage she removed all of them as per the advice of the sage.¹⁷⁶

By repeating the names of great women like Ahalya, Draupadi, Tārā, Sitā and Mandodari, the man attains mokṣā or salvation.¹⁷⁷

Pre-marital Sex Relations :

The samhitās often refer to sons of unwedded mothers exposed and attacked by animals. In the Ṛgvedaic period, unions without religious sanctions between men and women are not known. But the issues of such relations are suggested to be exposed to animals.¹⁷⁸

Instances of unmarried girls having sexual relations with a man and attaining motherhood are to be found in the Epic. These girls in due course got married according to the usual

176. प्राप्य भार्यामगस्त्यस्तु लोपामुद्रामभाषत ।

महार्हाण्युत्सृजैतानि वासांस्याभरणानि च ॥ - Mbh.वन.97.8

177. अहल्या द्रौपदी सीता तारा मण्डोदरी तथा ।

पञ्चकन्याः स्मरेन्नित्यं महापातकनाशनम् ॥ - Cf. Keshoram Aggarwal, Kalyāna Kalpataru, Woman Number, Vol.41, No.1, Gitā Press, Gorakhpur, Oct.1995 Page No.63

178. Cf. Dhairyabala P. Vora, Evolution of morlas in the Epics, G.R. Bhatkal, Bombay, 1959, Page No.27

religious rites and the children born to them were considered as belonging to the husbands of their mothers. Such a child shared equal rights with the other children of the mother in the wedlock. In spite of this, the husband of the mother was never addressed as the father of such a child. Vyāsa was addressed as the son of Parāśara and Karna as the son of Surya and not of Pāṇdu. This indicates that children were supposed to belong to their progenitor. This is the difference of opinion registered by the Dharmaśāstra writers. Manu in very definite terms declares that a seed sown in the field of another belongs to the owner of the field and not to the sower.¹⁷⁹

Vyāsa, the legendary compiler of the great Epic was himself a progeny of unwedded love. His mother Matsyagandhā was the foster daughter of a fisherman and rowed her father's ferry boat from one shore of the Ganges to the other. When sage Parāśara saw her, she was attracted by him and the desire to get her arose in his mind. He expressed his desire. But Matsyagandhā refused him as she was ashamed of cohabiting in public with so many people on both shores looking upon them.¹⁸⁰ But the

179. ओषवाताहृतं बीजं यस्य क्षेत्रे प्ररोहति ।

क्षेत्रीकस्यैव तद्बीजं न वटता लभते फलम् ॥ - Manu.IX.54

180. संगमं मम कल्याणि कुरुष्वेत्यभ्यमाषत ।

साब्रवीत् पश्य भगवन् पारावारे स्थितानृषीन् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.72

sage at once created a mist round the boat so that nobody could see them.¹⁸¹ The maiden spoke again that she was living under the protection of her father. If her maidenhood lapses by his contact, she will not be able to stay in her father's house thereafter.¹⁸² But she was relieved of her fear by a promise on the part of the sage that her maidenhood would be restored to her after the sexual union.¹⁸³ The sage further undertook to grant Matsyagandhā any boon she cared to ask. Matsyagandhā expressed the desire that a sweet perfume should come out from her body.

एवमुक्त्वा वरं वब्रे गौत्रसीगन्ध्यमुत्तमम् ।

स चास्मै भगवान् प्रादान्मनसः काङ्क्षितं भुवि ॥

- Mbh.आदि.63.80

The sage granted it and after the sexual union, she gave birth to a child and she cast off on an island of Yamunā river.

181. आवयोदृष्टयोरेभिः कथं तु स्यात् समागमः ।

एवं तयोक्तो भगवान् नीहारमसृजत् प्रभुः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.73

182. विस्मिता साभवत् कन्या व्रीडिता च तपस्विनी ।

विद्धि मां भगवान् कन्यां सदा पितृवशानुगाम् ॥

त्वत्संयोगाच्च दुष्येत कन्याभावो ममानघ ।

कन्यात्वे दूषिते वापि कथं शक्ये द्विजोत्तम ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.75-76

183. एवमुक्तवर्ती तां तु प्रीतिमानृषिसत्तमः ।

उवाच मत्प्रियं कृत्वा कन्यैव त्वं भविष्यसि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.78



As the child was cast off on an island (dvipa), it was called as Dvaipāyana.¹⁸⁴ In the same parva, when Matsyagandhā (as Satyavati) narrates this episode to Bhiṣma, she says that she agreed to the proposal of Parāśara because she was afraid of a curse if she were to refuse him.¹⁸⁵ She also states that the child born out of the union was cast off by her on island as instructed by the sage himself, so that she might be a virgin again.¹⁸⁶

Parāśara's spontaneous proposal to a fair fisher-woman without any idea of marriage with her indicates that such relations must not have been altogether unusual.

In the Mahābhārata Kunti, the mother of the Pāṇḍava heroes, had to undergo a similar experience. When Kunti was still a young girl and was staying with her father Kuntibhoja, she was entrusted with the task of receiving guests and treating them well. Once the famous sage Durvāsa happened to be their guest, Kunti served him so sincerely that the sage was pleased to grant her a boon. She was taught a mantra, by reciting

184. न्यस्तो द्वीपे स यद् बालस्तस्माद् द्वैपायनः स्मृतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.63.86

185. तमहं शापभीता च पितुर्भीता च भारत ।

वरैरसुलभैरुक्ता न प्रत्याख्यातुमुत्सहे ॥ - Mbh.आदि.104.10

186. ततो मामहं स मुनिर्गर्भमुत्सृज्य मामकम् ।

द्विपोऽस्या एव सरितः कन्यैव त्वं भविष्यसि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.104.13

which she could command any of the Gods to her service and conceive through that God.¹⁸⁷ On receiving the boon, she became very curious as she was immature. Just to test it, she invited Surya by reciting those mantras. The God appeared before her at once and was ready to be of use to her for the bestowal of a son, strong and refulgent like his own self.

तवाभिसंधिः सुभगे सूर्यात् पुत्रो भवेदिति ।

वीर्येणप्रतिमो लोके कवची कुण्डलीति च ॥

- Mbh.वन.306.14

Kunti however wanted Surya to return to his abode. But he refused to return without fulfilling his desire and threatened to curse the girl's father as well as the brahmin who so foolishly bestowed a boon on such an immature girl.¹⁸⁸ Then again Kunti tried to convince Surya on moral grounds saying that she did not want to destroy her dharma. Because in this world, maintaining the chastity is an honour for the virtuous way of woman's life.

187. यं यं देवं त्वमेतेन मन्त्रेणावाहयिष्यसि ।

तेन तेन वशे भद्रे स्थातव्यं ते भविष्यति ॥ - Mbh.वन.305.17

188. अथ गच्छाम्यहं भद्रे त्वया संगम्य सुस्मिते ।

यदि त्वं वचनं नाद्य करिष्यसि मम प्रियम् ॥ Mbh.वन.306.16

शपिष्ये त्वामहं कृद्धो ब्राह्मणं पितरं च ते ।

त्वत्कृते तान् प्रधक्ष्यामि सर्वानपि न संशयः ॥ - Mbh.वन.306.17

पिता माता गुरुवश्चैव येऽन्ये
 देहस्यास्य प्रभवन्ति प्रदाने ।
 नाहं धर्मं लोपयिष्यामि लोके
 स्त्रीणां वृत्तं पूज्यते देहरक्षा ॥

- Mbh.वन.306,23

But when Surya was not ready to go back without fulfilling the purpose for which his presence was desired, Kunti became afraid of the curse upon her family. But Surya did not think it necessary to inform any of her relatives because he declared "Neither your father, nor your mother, nor any of your elders have any right over you." He also said that a woman was free to behave as she liked. Yet he demolished the fears of Kunti by telling her that after the intercourse she would regain her virginity and that the son born of the union would be very famous.¹⁸⁹ In due course, she gave birth to a son, who later came to be called as Karṇā. But due to the fear of the kinsfolk she put him in a chest and floated the chest into the Ganges.¹⁹⁰

189. सा मया सह संगम्य पुनः कन्या भविष्यास ।

पुत्रश्च ते महाबाहुर्भविष्यति महायशः ॥ - Mbh.वन.307.16

190. जातमात्रं च तं गर्भं धात्र्या सम्यन्त्र्य भाविनी ।

मञ्जूषायां समाधाय स्वास्तीर्णायां समन्ततः ॥ - Mbh.वन.308.6

मधूच्छिष्टस्थितायां सा सुखायां रुदती तथा ।

श्लक्ष्णायां सुपिधानायामश्वनद्यामवासृजत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.308.7

In both the episodes of Matsyagandhā and Kunti, the father is said to be the proper person to handover the girl in marriage and hence sex relation without his knowledge and permission was against Dharma. Before marriage a maiden was the property of her father and was not independent to bestow herself to anybody. Recalling that swayamvara was an accepted type of marriage, even that was arranged by the father.

It should be noted that both of these women leave the child to nature's mercy, for different reasons. But Matsyagandhā in her married life as Satyavati makes no secret that she had a son before marriage. She frankly confessed everything to her step son Bhiṣma and invites Vyāsa for niyoga with her daughter-in-laws.¹⁹¹ Kunti keeps the birth of Karna a secret. She reveals this to Yudhiṣṭhira at the end of the war. The difference in behaviour of these two women may be because of the way these two women were brought up.

191. भीष्मस्य चास्य वचनान्नियोगाच्च ममानघ ।

अनुक्रोशाच्च भूतानां सर्वेषां रक्षणाय च ॥

अनृशंस्याच्च यद् ब्रूयां तच्छ्रुत्वा कर्तुमर्हसि ।

यवीयसरत्तव भ्रातुर्भार्ये सुरसुतोपमे ॥

रूपयौवनसम्पन्ने पुत्रकामे च धर्मतः ।

तयोरुत्पादयापत्यं समर्थो ह्यसि पुत्रक ॥

अनुरूपं कुलस्यास्य संतत्याः प्रसवस्य च ।

पेत्थ धर्मं सत्यवति परं चापरमेव च ॥ - Mbh.आदि.104.36-39

Incestuous Relations :

The Vedic hymns contain references throwing much light on the incestuous relations. In R̥g Veda, Agni is said to impregnate his own mother.¹⁹² In the same Saṁhita, he described the incestuous relation of Prajāpati with his daughter is described.¹⁹³ The twin God Aśvins - the children of Savitr and Uṣas married their sister Surya. Puṣan loved his sister.¹⁹⁴

The marriage hymn of the R̥gveda (X.85) categorically indicates that marriage was contracted outside the family circle. Upto what generation family relationship was recognised for this purpose can not be definitely ascertained. The Mahābhārata

192. तव श्रिये मरुतो मर्जयन्त रुद्र यत् ते जनिम चारु चित्रम् ।

पदं यद् विष्णोरुपमं निधायि तेन पासि गुह्यं नाम गोनाम् ॥ - Rg.Veda.V.3,3

193. प्रतिष्ठ यस्य वीरकर्ममिष्णदनुष्ठितं नु नार्यो अपौहत् ।

पुनस्तदा बृहति यत् कनाया दुहितुरा अनुभृतमनर्वा ॥

मध्या यत् कर्त्वमभवदभीके कामं कृण्वाने पितरि युवत्याम् ।

मनानग्रेतो जहतुर्वियन्ता सानौ निषिक्तं सुकृतस्य योनौ ॥

पिता यत् स्वां दुहितरमधिष्कन् क्षमया रेतः संजग्मानो निकिञ्चित् ।

स्वाध्योऽजनयन् ब्रह्म देवा वास्तोष्पतिं व्रतपां निरतक्षन् ॥ - Rg.Veda.X.61,5-7

194. पूषणं न्व जाश्वमुष स्तोषम वाजिनम् ।

स्वसुर्यो जार उच्यते ॥ - Rg.Veda.VII.55,4

अग्ने शुक्रेण शोचिषोरु प्रथमसे बृहत् ।

अभिक्रन्दन् वृषायसे वि वो मदे गर्भं दधासि जामिषु विवक्षसे ॥ - Rg.Veda.X.21.8

evidence confirms Vedic practice. The way in which Karna condemns sex freedom in the Madra and the Bāl̥hika countries brings out the contempt the complier of the Mahābhārata harboured for such laxity. "They are shameless. These Bāl̥hikas, indulge at pleasure in the presence of everybody and with anybody, even with close relatives - with father, mother, son, mother-in-law, mother's brother, son-in-law, daughter, grand sons, kindred, friends, guests and also the slaves."¹⁹⁵ There is also a positive evidence in the epic condemning incestuous relation, particularly between the father and the daughter. King Pratipa was approached by the river Goddess Gaṅgā for the satisfaction of her sexual desire. She occupied the right side of his lap and requested the king to satisfy her passion. But the king refused and said that he will accept her as his daughter-in-law. He said "O beautiful one, your proposal is pleasing, but it is due to your own fault that I cannot accept it, because it would be destructive of Dharma. You have chosen the right side of my lap reserved for one's children (apatyas) and daughter-in-law. You have not occupied the left thigh which is occupied by a beloved. So, I will not be able to

195. गायन्त्यथ च नृत्यन्ति स्त्रियो मत्ता विवासमः ।

नगरागारवप्रेषु बहिर्माल्यानुलोपनाः ॥

मत्तावगीतैर्विविधैः खरोष्ट्रनिनदोपमैः ।

अनावृता मैथुने ताः कामचाराश्च सर्वशः ॥ - Mbh.कर्ण.44.12-13

satisfy you. But I select you as my daughter-in-law."¹⁹⁶ This episode indicates that not only the daughter but also the daughter-in-law was unapproachable.

The Mahābhārata also records that sex-relations between a mother and a son were not within the bounds of dharma. When Arjuna was in the heaven, Urvaśi was struck with passion and approached him. But Arjuna refused her saying that cohabiting with her would be a sinful action, as she was a wife of his ancestors (Guru) to him. Hence he considered her as his Guru and of the same status as Kunti and Saci - wife of Indra. Convincing this way, he said that she should not entertain such unworthy thoughts about him as she was more respectable than all the elders. He concluded her to be the mother of his family like Kunti, Madri and Saci. Thus he said that she was fit to be worshipped.

196. त्वया निवृत्तमेतत् तु यन्मां चोदयसि प्रियम् ।

अन्यथा प्रतिपन्नं मां नाशयेद् धर्मविप्लवः ॥

प्राप्य दक्षिणमूरं मे त्वमाश्लिष्टा वराङ्गने ।

अपत्यानां स्नुषाणां च भीरुं विद्वयेतदासनम् ॥

संव्योरुः कामिनीभोग्यस्त्वया स च विवर्जितः ।

तस्मादहं नाचरिष्ये त्वयि कामं वराङ्गने ॥

स्नुषा मे भव सुश्रोणि पुत्रार्थत्वां वृणोम्यहम् ।

स्नुषापक्षं हि विमोरु त्वमागम्य समाश्रिता ॥ - Mbh.आदि.97.8-11

दुःश्रुतं मेऽस्तु सुभगे यन्मां वदसि भाविनि ।
 गुरुदारैः समाना मे निश्चयेन वरानने ॥
 यथा कुन्ती महाभागा यथेन्द्राणि शची मम ।
 तथा त्वमपि कल्याणि नात्र कार्या विचारणा ॥
 यच्चेक्षितासि विस्पष्टं विशेषेण मया शुभे ।
 तच्च कारणपूर्वं हि शृणु सत्यं शुचिस्मिते ॥
 इयं पौरवंशस्य जननी मुदितेति ह ।
 त्वामहं दुष्टवांस्तत्र विज्ञायोत्फुल्लोचनः ॥
 न मामर्हसि कल्याणि अन्यथा ध्यातुमप्सरः ।
 गुरोर्गुरुतरा मे त्वं मम त्वं वंशवर्धिनी ॥

- Mbh. वन.46.37-41

Arjuna considered Urvaśi as his mother because she was once the wife of Pururavā ancestor of Arjuna.

In the episode, not only the mother but any lady who may be considered to have the same status as one's mother is considered unapproachable. According to Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa, sixteen varieties of women are known to be the mothers. They are a foster-mother, the wife of the preceptor, the consorts of one's own chosen deity, wife of the father, a virgin, a real sister, the wife of the master, mother-in-law, maternal grand mother, grandmother. The wife of the brother, the sister of the mother, the sister of the father and the wife of the maternal uncle.

स्तन्यदात्री गर्भधात्री भक्ष्यदात्री गुरुप्रिया ।
 अभीष्टदेवपत्नी च पितुः पत्नी च कन्यका ॥
 सगर्भजा च या भगिनी स्वामिपत्नी प्रियाप्रसूः ।
 मातुर्माता पितुर्माता सोदरस्य प्रिया तथा ॥
 मातुः पितुश्च भगिनी मातुलानी तथैव च ।
 जनानां वेदविहिता मातरः षोडश स्मृताः ॥

- Brahma Vaivarta¹⁹⁷

Though one of the duties of the Brahmachārin was chastity, reference is made in several places to the possibility of misconduct between a student and the wife of his preceptor. The Mahābhārata also refers to Śvetaketu who begot a son on the wife of his preceptor.¹⁹⁸

But in another anecdote, sexual relations with a preceptor's wife is considered as an unworthy act. In the absence of the preceptor Devāśarma, his pupil Uttanka was entrusted with the management of the hermitage. His preceptor's wife then entered in the period of her ṛtu. The women of the āśrama there upon approached Uttanka with a request to cohabit with the preceptor's wife so that her ṛtu may not go waste. But Uttanka

197. Cf. Keshoram Aggarwal, Kalyāṇa Kalpataru, Hind Samskr̥ti Number, Vol.46, No.1, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Oct.2000, Page No.32

198. उक्तैव स महापात्रः सर्वज्ञानैकभाजनः ।

पुत्रानुत्पाद्य तस्यां च यज्ञैः सन्तर्प्य देवताः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.220.

thought he should not act in that unworthy manner, and he was not instructed by his preceptor to fulfill that demand. When the preceptor returned, he was much pleased with Uttanka and bestowed upon him all the siddhis (mysterious powers) and permitted him to go home.¹⁹⁹ This episode states that preceptor's wife is given the status of the mother and accordingly any connection with her is considered incestuous and therefore unrighteous. This indicates that Uttanka's behaviour is ideal rather than normal. The Mahābhārata along with the smṛti literature enumerate sexual relations with the wife of a preceptor as the greatest of the sins (Mahābhārata) and prescribe death as its atonement.²⁰⁰

Mahābhārata considered preceptor's daughter as a sister. Kaca's refusal to Devayāni's proposal of marriage must have been on the same ground though the Mahābhārata does not

199. उवाच चैनं वत्सोत्तङ्ग किं ते प्रियं करवाणीति

धर्मतो हि शुश्रूषितोऽस्मि भवता तन प्रीतिः ।

परस्परं नौ संवृद्धा तदनुजाने भवन्तं

सर्वानेव कामानवाप्स्यसि गम्यतामिति ॥ - Mbh.आदि.3.89

200. ब्रह्महत्या सुरापानं स्तेयं गुर्वगनागमः ।

महान्ति पातकान्याहुः संसर्गश्चापि तैः सह ॥ - Manu, XI,54

clarify the point.²⁰¹ Manu prescribes a punishment in the form of a lunar penance for marriage with a female related in the third generation.²⁰²

Varṇa System :

Mahābhārata records marriage taboos in terms of Varṇa position of an individual, the breaking rules of which were not very seriously punished; breach of rules regulating inter-varṇa marriage however was a serious lapse in social behaviour which was not tolerated.

The Mahābhārata is conversant with the technical words anuloma i.e. taking a wife below one's own varṇa and pratiloma which meant marrying a woman belonging to a

201. पूज्यो मान्यश्च भगवान् यथा तव पिता मम ।

तथा त्वमनवद्याङ्गि पूजनीयतरा मम ॥

प्रणेभ्योऽपि प्रियतरा भार्गवस्य महात्मनः ।

त्वं भद्रे धर्मतः पूज्या गुरुपुत्री सदा मम ॥

यथा मम गुरुर्नित्यं मान्यः शुक्रः पिता तव ।

देवयानि तथैव त्वं नैवं मां वक्तुमर्हसि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.77.6-8

202. पैतृष्टसेयीं भगिनीं स्वस्त्रीयां मातुरेव च ।

मातुश्च भ्रातुस्तनयां गत्वा चान्द्रायणं चरेत् ॥

एतास्तिष्ठन्तु भार्यार्थे नोपयच्छेत्तु बुद्धिमान् ।

ज्ञातित्वेनानुपेयास्ताः पतति ह्युपयन्नधः ॥ - Manu.XI.171-172

higher varṇa. Giving a discourse upon marriage, Bhiṣma says "A brahmin has a right to marry a woman of three varṇas. A kṣatriya has a right to marry a woman belonging to the two varṇas, while a vaiśya has a right to marry a woman of only one varṇa, because it is only on these wives that a progeny equal to one's own status can be produced."²⁰³

Bhiṣma records a different opinion with regard to taking śūdra wife. He states "It is believed that a man of the higher three varṇas can marry a woman belonging to a śūdra varṇa; but such a wife is meant only for pleasure, and not for acquiring religious merit or begetting progeny, because good people do not appreciate procreation in a śūdra woman."²⁰⁴ Again some religious people also state that a brahmin who begets children on a śūdra woman should expiate his sin."

203. तिस्रो भार्या ब्राह्मणस्य द्वे भार्ये क्षत्रियस्य तु ।

वैश्यः स्वजात्यां विन्देत तारुपत्यं समं भवेत् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.44.11

204. चतस्रो विहिता भार्या ब्राह्मणस्य पितामह ।

ब्राह्मणी क्षत्रिया वैश्या शूद्रा च रतिमिच्छतः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.4

क्षत्रियस्यापि भार्ये द्वे विहिते कुरुनन्दन ।

तृतीया च भवेच्छूद्रा न तु दृष्टान्ततः स्मृता ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.47

एकैव हि भवेद् भार्य वैश्यस्य कुरुनन्दन ।

द्वितीया तु भवेच्छूद्रा न तु दृष्टान्ततः स्मृता ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.51

शूद्रस्य स्यात् सवर्णैव भार्या नान्या कथंचन । - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.56

शूद्रां शयनमारोप्य ब्राह्मणो यात्यधोगतिम् ।
 प्रायश्चित्तीयते चापि विधिदृष्टेन कर्मणा ॥
 तत्र जातेष्वपत्येषु द्विगुणं स्याद् युधिष्ठिर ।

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.9-10

It has been believed that a Brāhmin can marry a woman of all the four varṇas. But only a brāhmin woman can serve him better than the woman belonging to the other three varṇas.²⁰⁵

अन्नं पानं च माल्यं च वासांस्याभरणानि च ।
 ब्राह्मण्यैतानि देयानि भर्तुः सा हि गरीयसी ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.31-34

A kṣatryia woman is not equal to a brāhmin woman, and a Vaiśya woman is not equal to a kṣatriya woman due to their saṃskāras.²⁰⁶

205. तिस्रः कृत्वा पुरो भार्याः पश्चाद् विन्देत ब्रह्मणीम् ।

सा ज्येष्ठा सा च पूज्या स्यात् सा च भार्या गरीयसी ॥

स्नानं प्रसाधनं भर्तुर्दन्तधावनमञ्जनम् ।

हव्यं कव्यं च यच्चान्यद् धर्मयुक्तं गृहे भवेत् ॥

न तस्यां जातु तिष्ठान्त्यामन्या तत् कर्तुमर्हति ।

ब्राह्मणी त्वेव कुर्याद् वा ब्राह्मणस्य युधिष्ठिर ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.31-33

206. यथा च सदृशी जातु ब्राह्मण्याः क्षत्रिया भवेत् ॥

क्षत्रियायास्तथा वैश्या न जातु सदृशी भवेत् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.39-40

It is clear that even when a śūdra wife is allowed, the progeny of such a union is not given any status in society but is looked down as sinful. This represents the final state in the anuloma marriages with a woman of a śūdra varṇa. In spite of this theoretical ban on marriage with a śūdra wife, the eminent persons in Mahābhārata had contract marriage with women of śūdra or even lower varṇas. King Santanu not only married Matsyagandhā, a daughter of a fisherman, and her children succeeded him on the throne of Hastināpura. He also married Gaṅgā whose lineage is not given in the Mahābhārata and a son Bhiṣma is the ruler at the court of Hastināpura.

Arjuna married Nāga woman Ulupi by name. Once Arjuna happened to enter the palace in which Dharmaputra was living with Pāncālī. As a result, Arjuna had to go on a pilgrimage for twelve years. Arjuna reached Gaṅgādvāra. When he got down into the river Gaṅgā he saw Ulūpi, the daughter of Nāgarāja. Ulūpi told him that she grew amorous when she saw him.²⁰⁷ But Arjuna told her that Dharmaputra had imposed on him celibacy for twelve years and that it was right to marry in the meantime.²⁰⁸ Ulūpi argued with him and convinced him

207. तां मामनङ्गलापितां त्वत्कृते कुरुनन्दन ।

अनन्यां नन्दयस्वाद्य प्रदानेनात्मनोऽनघ ॥ - Mbh.आदि.213.20

208. ब्रह्मचर्यमिदं भद्रे मम द्वादशवर्षिकम् ।

धर्मराजेन चादिष्टं नाहमास्मि स्वयंवशः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.213.21

that it was not wrong to marry her.²⁰⁹ She gave Arjuna a boon that all creatures living in water will be under his control.²¹⁰

In Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, a story is narrated. A brahmin, Gautama married a dasyu woman²¹¹ and by adopting the profession of a hunter fell from his status.²¹² Not only that, his friend who visited him refused to touch his food.²¹³ This indicates that brahmin Gautama by his marriage with a śūdra woman lost his brahminhood and a fellow brahmin who had preserved it, refused even to touch things or eat the food offered by him. Though the reason of his losing his varṇa is not entirely on account of marriage to a śūdra woman but also due to his long association and adoption of the profession fit for a śūdra. But marriage and long association apart from the

209. स च ते धर्म एव स्याद् दत्त्वा प्राणान् ममार्जुन ।

भक्तां च भज मां पार्थ सतामेतान्मतं प्रभो ॥ - Mbh.आदि.213.29

210. दत्त्वा वरमजेयत्वं जले सर्वत्र भारत ।

साध्या जलचराः सर्वे भविष्यन्ति न संशयः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.213.36

211. एतत् सम्प्राप्य हृष्टात्मा दस्योः सर्वद्विजस्तथा ।

तस्मिन् गृहवरे राजस्तथा रेमे स गौतमः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.168.34

212. गौतमः संनिकर्षेण दस्युभिः समतामियात् ।

तथा तु वसतस्तस्य दस्युग्रमे सुखं तदा ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.168.38

213. स तत्र न्यवसद् विप्रो घृणी किञ्चिदसंस्पृशन् ।

सुधिताश्छन्दमानोऽपि भोजनं नाभ्यनन्दन ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.168.52

profession was one of the reasons of losing one's varṇa. This represents the final state in the anuloma marriages with a woman of śūdra varṇa.

The above survey reveals clearly that anuloma marriage was allowed and encouraged.

Pratiloma marriages on the other hand were prohibited from the very beginning. Nowhere has the Epic shown any consideration for that type of marriage. This is clearly reflected in Draupada's remark when his daughter was taken away by the Pāṇḍavas disguised as unknown brahmins. He asked Dhṛṣṭadyūmna with a fallen face "Did any śūdra or a person of a low birth take her away? or is she taken away by a vaiśya? who has placed his foot over my head? who has cast the garland in the cemetery?"²¹⁴

The Śānti Parva of Mahābhārata says that the man should accept the woman even of a lower varṇa because, women, स्त्र and water these three according to Dharma have no दोष.

214. पाञ्चालराजस्तु विषण्णरूपस्तान् पाण्डवानप्रतिविन्दमानः ॥

धृष्टद्युम्नं पर्यपृच्छन्महात्मा कः सा गता केन नीता च कृष्णा ॥

कश्चिन्न शूद्रेण न हीनजेन वैश्येन वा करदेनोपपन्ना ।

कश्चिन्न पदं मूर्ध्नि न पङ्कदिग्धं कश्चिन्न माला पतिता श्मशाने ॥ - Mbh.आदि.191.14-15

स्त्रीरत्नं दुष्कुलाच्चापि विषादप्यमृतं पिबेत् ।

अदूष्या हि स्त्रियो रत्नमाप इत्येव धर्मतः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.165.32

This shows that good women with good characters of all varṇas are considered as pious and man can accept any such woman of any varṇa as his wife.

Divorce :

The ideal of life long fidelity to husband had some exceptions in which a woman was asked to leave her husband to marry another person. The later Dharmaśāstra literature liberally permits the husband to remarry during the life time of the first wife, but refuses the remedy of divorce to the wife even when completely forsaken by the husband. Manu advances the extreme view that the wife's marital tie and duty do not come to an end even if the husband were to sell or abandon her.²¹⁵ According to the Hindu tradition, the marriage union was indissoluble. Manu himself observes that a wife is not to blame if she abandons a husband, who is impotent, insane or suffering from an incurable or contagious disease.²¹⁶ The

215. न निष्कयवसिर्गाभ्यां भर्तुर्भार्या विमुच्यते ।

एवं धर्म विजानीमः प्राक्प्रजापतिनिर्मितम् ॥ - Manu.IX.46

216. उन्मत्तं पतितं क्लृप्तमबीजं पापरोणिणम् ।

न त्यागोऽस्ति द्विषन्त्याश्च न च दायापर्ततनम् ॥ - Manu.IX.79

abandonment of the husband practically amounted to a divorce, for Manu permits such a wife to remarry if her previous marriage was not consummated.²¹⁷ The children of the new union were legal heirs to their parents. The Atharva veda refers to a woman marrying again,²¹⁸ very probably in the life time of her first husband; it lays down a ritual intended to unite her permanently in heaven with her husband. Her second marriage presupposed a divorce.

Karna told Draupadi in the assembly to leave her husbands and marry someone else.

त्रयः किलेमे ह्यधना भवन्ति
 दासः पुत्रश्चास्वतन्त्रा च नारी ।
 दासस्य पत्नी त्वधनस्य भद्रे
 हीनेश्वरा दासधनं च सर्वम् ॥
 अन्तं वृणीष्व पतिमाशु भाविनि
 यस्माद् दास्यं न लभसि देवनेन ।

217. या पत्या वा परित्यक्ता विधवा वा स्वयेच्छया ।

उत्पादयेत्पुनर्भूत्वा स पौनर्भव उच्यते ॥

सा चेदक्षतयोनिः स्याद् गतप्रत्यागतापि ।

पौनर्भवेन भर्ता सा पुनः संस्कारमर्हति ॥ - Manu.IX.17.4-5

218. या पूर्वं पतिं वित्याऽथान्यं विन्दतेऽपरम् ।

पञ्चौदनं तावजं ददातो न वियोषतः ॥

समानलोको भवति पुनर्भुवाऽवरः पतिः । - Manu.IX.5.27.8

अवाच्या वै पतिषु कामवृत्ति-
नित्यं दास्ये विदितं तत् तवास्तु ॥

- Mbh.सभा.71.2-3

It seems it was possible for a woman to leave her living husband and marry any other person.

Sairandhri was the pseudonym assumed by Pāṇchālī. After their twelve years of exile in the forests, Dharmaputra and his brothers with Pāṇchālī spent that period in the palace of the king Virāta. Each assumed a new name and accepted different types of service under the king. Pāṇchālī assumed the name of Sairandhri and served as a companion and attendant to the princess. One day, Kichaka, the mighty brother-in-law of the king, tried to molest Pāṇchālī, though Pāṇchālī's husbands were alive.²¹⁹ But she was timely protected by Bhima by killing

219. स्वागतं ते सुकेशान्ते सुव्युष्टा रजनी मम ।

स्वामिनी त्वमनुप्राप्ता प्रकुरुष्व मम प्रियम् ॥

सुवर्णमालाः कुम्बूश्च कुण्डले परिहाटके ।

नानापत्तनजे शुभ्रे मणिरत्नं च शोभनम् ॥

आहरन्तु च वस्त्राणि कौशिकान्यजिनानि च ।

अस्ति मे शयनं दिव्यं त्वदर्थमुपकल्पितम् ।

एहि तत्र मया सार्द्धं पिबस्व मधुमाधवीम् ॥ - Mbh.विराट.16.1-3

अन्या भद्रे नयिष्यन्ति राजपुत्र्याः प्रतिश्रुतम् ।

इत्येतां दक्षिणे पाणौ सूतपुत्रः परामृशत् ॥ - Mbh.विराट.16.5

Kichaka.²²⁰ According to Sairandhri, it was the duty of a husband to protect his wife, as she gives birth to his sons.²²¹

Remarriage :

Sati custom was not common. Madri is the only example of the woman character who died as Sati in the Mahābhārata. Satyawati, Kunti and Vichitravirya's widows Ambikā and Ambālikā lived as widows but never thought of remarriage and sati. If a young wife without consummation became a widow, her second marriage with her husband's younger brother was legitimate. If there was no younger brother, she could marry someone else. If a bride, after going to her husband's house came back to her parents without being polluted could marry

220. पञ्चाधिकं शतं तच्च निहितं तेन भारत ।

महावनमिविच्छन्तं शिश्ये विगलितद्रुमम् ॥

एवं ते निहिता राजञ्छतं पञ्च च कीचकाः ।

स च सेनापतिः पूर्वमित्येतत् सूतषट्शतम् ॥ - Mbh.विराट.16.32-33

221. समयं रक्षमाणानां भार्या वो न भविष्यति ।

भार्यायां रक्ष्यमाणायां प्रजा भवति रक्षिता ॥

प्रजायां रक्ष्यमाणायामात्मा भवति रक्षितः ।

आत्मा हि जायते तस्यां तेन जायां विदुर्बुधाः ॥

भर्ता तु भार्यया रक्ष्यः कथं जायान्ममोदरे ।

वदतां वर्णधर्माश्च ब्राह्मणानामिति श्रुतः ॥ - Mbh.विराट.21.40-42

another with marriage rites and become a punarbhu wife (a widow remarried). The marriages described in the Mahābhārata show more understanding and generosity for helpless women.

The Vivāha saṁskāra described in the Mahābhārata, are a guideline for the present and future also.



Chapter - III

Fields of Women's Activities in the Mahābhārata

Women as Daughters-in-law :

From the day of marriage, the wife took upon herself the responsibility of the householder's stage of life. Service to the husband and elders in the family was the sacred duty of the housewife. In the period of R̥gveda, the women were greatly honoured in her father-in-law's house. Not only she had a respectable position in the family, but had an authority over her husband, father-in-law and brother-in-law.

साम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव साम्राज्ञी श्वश्रवां भव ।

ननान्दरि साम्राज्ञी भव साम्राज्ञी अधि देवृषु ॥ - R̥g Veda X.85.46

She had a respectable position.¹ At the time of marriage, father told his son-in-law that his daughter will be his कुलपा, and so he is giving her to him.² In the Mahābhārata, Draupadi personally looked after her mother-in-law Kunti's needs like clothes, bed, bath, meals etc.

1. भगमस्या वर्च आदिव्याधि वृक्षादिव स्रजम् ।

महाबुध इव पर्वतो ज्योक् पितृष्वस्ताम् ॥ - Atharva Veda I.14.1

2. एषा ते कुलपा राजन् तामु ते परि दन्नासि ।

ज्योक् पितृष्वस्ताता आ शीर्ष्णः समोप्यात् ॥ - Atharva Veda I.14.3

नित्यमार्यामहं कुन्ती वीरसू सत्यवादिनीम् ।
 स्वयं परिचराम्येतां पानाच्छादनभोजनैः ॥
 नैतामतिशये जातु वस्त्रभूषणभोजनैः ।
 नापि परिवदे चाहं तां पृथां पृथिवीसमाम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.233.40-41

In the same epic, the character of Brāhmini is mentioned who took the responsibility of the welfare of the whole family.

भर्तृश्चापि हितं यत् तत् सततं सानुवर्तते ।
 देवतातिथिभृत्यानां श्वश्रूश्चशुरयोस्तथा ॥
 शुश्रूषणपरा नित्यं सततं संयतेन्द्रिया ।

- Mbh.वन.206.15-16

Sāvitri was a dutiful daughter-in-law, and in turn was loved by them like a daughter of their own.

श्वश्रूं शरीरसत्कारैः सवैराच्छादनादिभिः ।
 श्वशुरं देवसत्कारैर्वाचः संयमनेन च ॥

- Mbh.वन.295.20

Sāvitri as a daughter-in-law requested her parents-in-law to allow her to go to forest with her husband.³ Then

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3. साभिवाद्याब्रवीच्छ्वश्रूं श्वशुरं च महाव्रता ।
 अयं गच्छति मे भर्ता फलाहारो महावनम् ॥
 इच्छेयमम्यनुज्ञाता आर्यया श्वशुरेण ह ।
 अनेन सह निर्गन्तु न मेऽद्य विरहः क्षमः ॥ ⇨

Dyumatsena, her father-in-law allowed her to go as it was her first desire after marriage.

यतः प्रभृति सावित्री पित्रा दत्ता स्नुषा मम ।

नानयाम्यर्थनायुक्तमुक्तपूर्वं स्मराम्यहम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.296.27

तदेषां लभतां कामं यथाभिलाषितं वधूः ।

अप्रमादश्च कर्तव्यः पुत्रि सत्यवतः पथि ॥

- Mbh.वन.296.28

Kunti, advised her daughter-in-law Draupadi to be an obedient wife as Indrāni, Swāhā, Rohini and Damayanti⁴ and also to become the mother of virtuous sons.⁵ She also advised her to welcome the guests, sacred people, elders, old people

⇒ गुर्वाग्निहोत्रार्थकृते प्रस्थितश्च सुतस्तव ।

न निवार्यो निवार्यः स्यादन्यथा प्रस्थितो वनम् ॥

संवत्सरः किञ्चि दूतो न निष्कान्ताहमाश्रमात् ।

वनं कुसुमितं द्रष्टुं परं कौतूहलं हि मे ॥ - Mbh.वन.296.23-26

4. यथेन्द्राणी हरिहये स्वाहा चैव विभावसौ ।

रोहिणी च यथा सोमे दमयन्ती यथा नले ॥

यथा वैश्रवणे भद्रा वसिष्ठे चाप्यरुन्धती ।

यथा नारायणे लक्ष्मीस्तथा त्वं भव भर्तृषु ॥ - Mbh.आदि.198.5-6

5. जीवसूर्वीरसूर्भद्रे बहुसौख्यसमन्विता ।

सुभगा भोगसम्पन्ना यज्ञपत्नी पतिव्रता ॥ - Mbh.आदि.198.7

and also everybody who deserves respect.⁶ She blesses Draupadi to have all the happiness on this earth.

पृथिव्यां यानि रत्नानि गुणवन्ति गुणान्विते ।
तान्याप्नुहि त्वं कल्याणि सुखिनी शरदां शतम् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.198.11

In the Sanskrit literature, beginning from the vedic tradition, till the Mahabharata period, women as daughters-in-law, had more value in Hindu families. This shows that in the Mahābhārata period, there was harmony in the family, and women were more respected in all the fields.

Women as Mothers :

Motherhood is the highest reach of womanhood. To a Hindu, even the God is revealed as the mother of all creations. In the words of the Manu smṛti, "From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher and a mother a thousandfold to a father."⁷ Mother has always been praised and respected. The glory of the mother is indescribable. Her place

6. अतिथिनागतवान् साधून् वृद्धान् बालंस्तथा गुरून् ।

पूजयान्त्या यथान्यायं शश्वद् गच्छन्तु ते समाः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.198.8

7. उपाध्यायान्दशाचार्य आचार्याणां शतं पिता ।

सहस्रं तु पितृन्माता गौरवेणातिरिच्यते ॥ - Manu.II.145

is high. She is peerless and incomparable. She is more respectable than the teacher, preceptor, father and even the God. मातृदेवो भव is a dictum known by Indinas. Observation of rectitude, service of one's own self, religion and desire and endeavour of gaining the knowledge of scriptures - to arouse such tendencies in the minds of children is the duty of the mother. In the Mahābhārata, great kṣatriya women like Vidulā always wished her son to fight in the war for victory, as it is the duty of a kṣatriya. She scolded her son whenever he was defeated by Sindhurāja in the battlefield.⁸ She supported him to try for victory which was suitable for a kṣatriya king.⁹ She also said that a son, who does not do दान, तपस्या and who does not speak truth, and who takes interest in earning money, is not at all a son of his mother in the real sense.

दाने तपसि सत्ये च यस्य नोच्चरितं यशः ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.133.23

8. अनन्दनं मया जातं द्विषतां हर्षवर्धन ।

न मया त्वं न पित्रा च जातः काभ्यागतो ह्यसि ॥

निर्मन्युश्चाप्यसंख्येयः पुरुषः क्लीबसाधनः ।

यावज्जीवं निराशोऽस्ति कल्याणाय धुरं वह ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.133.5-6

9. माऽऽत्मानमवन्यस्व मैत्रमल्पेन वीभरः ।

मनः कृत्वा सुकल्याणं मा भैस्त्वं प्रतिसंहर ॥

उत्तिष्ठ हे कापुरुष मा शैष्वैवं पराजितः ।

अमित्रान् नन्दयन् सर्वान् निर्मानो बन्धुशोकदः ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.133.7-8

She wishes that no woman in the world should give birth to such a son who does the work which gives happiness to his enemies.

निरमर्ष निरुत्साहं निर्वीर्यमरिनन्दनम् ।

मा स्म सीमन्तिनी काचिज्जनयेत् पुत्रमीदृशम् ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.133.30

That man, who lives coward like women, is not a man.¹⁰ On the part of a heroic mother like Vidulā, it was not right to welcome a son who came home being defeated in the battle. Thus, she emboldened him by saying that she would be more proud of a son who had sacrificed his life in the battle field than the one who returned home defeated. All his arguments which were excused for his cowardness, were refuted by his mother. At last, Sanjaya engaged again in a battle with the king of Sindhu.

In the Mahābhārata, Gāndhārī told that she never differentiated her sons and the Pāndavas, and told that it was the duty of Dhṛtarāshtra to protect Pāndavas.¹¹

10. आयासं हृदयं कृत्वा मृगयस्व पुनःस्वकम् ।

परं विषहते यस्मात् तस्मात् पुरुष उच्यते ॥

तमाहुर्व्यर्थनामानं स्त्रीवद् य इह जीवति । - Mbh.उद्योग.133.35-36

11. भगवन्नाभ्यसूयामि नैतानिच्छामि नश्यतः ।

पुत्रशोकेन तु बलान्मनो विह्वलतीव मे ॥

यथैव कुन्त्या कौन्तेया रक्षितव्यास्तथा ।

तथैव धृतराष्ट्रेण रक्षितव्या यथा त्वया ॥ - Mbh.स्त्री.14.14-15

Mother and father are the visible Gods on this earth. Padma Purāṇa says "mother is the embodiment of all the Tirthas or sacred waters. The father is the living God on the earth. They should be worshipped by their children with greatest effort in all sincerity, love and devotion, even as a Bhakta would worship his favourite deity."¹² The pain that the mother bears for her child cannot be paid off by any means trying even for thousand and thousands of years on the earth.

यं मातापितरौ क्लेशं सहेते सम्भवे नृणाम् ।
न तस्य निष्कृतिः शक्या कर्तुं वर्षशतैरपि ॥

- Manu.II.227

A mother keeps her child in her womb for nine months. Nothing is greater than this. Discarding all her likes and dislikes, she guards and nourishes her unborn child in her womb. Naturally, nobody bears a single minute particle in their body which troubles or pains. But it is the mother who sustains the unborn child in her womb for a long period of nine months. After giving birth to the child suffering great pains, she has to undergo immense troubles in bringing up the child. Hence, the mother is glorified in the Mahābhārata. According to this epic, mother is more respected than the

12. सर्वतीर्थमयी माता सर्वदेवमयः पिता ।

मातरं पितरं तस्मात् सर्वयत्नेन पूजयेत् ॥ - Padma Purāṇa

father, as the mother takes care of her child more affectionately than the father.

मातृस्तु गौरवादन्ये पितृनन्ये च मेनिरे ।
दुष्करं कुरुते मता विवर्धयति या प्रजाः ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.17

Both the father and the mother always wish their son victory (यश), fame (कीर्ति) and wealth (ऐश्वर्य).

अशंसते हि पुत्रेषु पिता माता च भारत ।
यशः कीर्तिमथैश्वर्यं प्रजा धर्मं तथैव च ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.20

So according to Dharma, a son must fulfill the dreams of his father and mother to satisfy them.¹³

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Mahābhārata gives more importance to the mother. But the importance of the father is not ignored. It advises to respect father, mother, fire, Guru and Ātma.

पिता माता तथैवाग्निर्गुरुरात्मा च पञ्चमः ।
यस्यैते पूजिताः पार्थ तस्या लोकावुभौ जितौ ॥

- Mbh.वन.169.14

13. तयोराशां तु सफलं यः करोति स धर्मवित् ।

पिता माता च राजेन्द्र तुष्यतो यस्य नित्यशः ॥ - Mbh.वन.205.21

पिता माता च भगवन्नैतौ महैवतं परम् ।
यद् दैवतेभ्यः कर्तव्यं तदेताभ्यां करोम्यहम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.214.18

The mother is an adorable deity and the best preceptor or the best teacher.

नास्ति भूमिसमं दानं नास्ति मातृसमो गुरुः ।
नास्ति सत्यसमो धर्मो नास्ति दानसमो निधिः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.62.92

Hence, the role of the mother in bringing up the children is very important. It is very well said that great persons became great because they were the sons of great mothers. She plays a very important role in making her child great and also her husband to lead a successful life. It is true as per the dictum "Behind every successful man, there is a woman."

Education :

Education is the very heart of the nation. Women are really equal halves of men from every point of view. But unfortunately, society regarded women as 'weaker sex.' Naturally after the vedic age, there was a temporary deterioration in the status of women during the dark period of the Smṛti Age. Manu Smṛti, the most respected and one of the ancient of all Smṛtis, pays the greatest homage to women in ever memorable verse.

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तत्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥

- Manu.3.56; Mbh.अनुशासन.45.5

Hindu Society has always honoured women. Women have been considered as the equal halves of men and thereby, completing them, like halves of a shell completing the whole shell ("ardha-vrigalamiva") and filling up the void in their lives - not only as equal partners of men but also as infinitely superior to men. In the sphere of education too, women in India have, from the beginning, have equal opportunities with men to develop the full potentialities of their nature in different spheres of life.

The Sanskrit word '*Śikṣā*' and English word 'education' are nowadays synonyms to a great extent *Śikṣā* is a derivative form the verbal root शिक्षा विद्योपादाने that is to impart vidyā to the disciple. The word 'education' according to the Oxford English Dictionary means systematic instruction of a subject. The word 'education' has its origin in Latin 'education' meaning 'to rear.' But the sense of 'rearing' has been gradually dropped from it and it remained only in the form of teaching or instructing. 'विद्योपादाने' is a compound of Vidyā + Upādāna. Since it is a verb, so Upādāna must mean to grasp, in other words to learn.

The educational system in India may legitimately claim to be unique in the world in many respects. From the ancient

period, India has recognised only one supreme goal of life, viz., self-realization. Hence, in India, education has never been objective or practical in the narrow sense of the term, that is being confined only to mundane subjects and objective arts and crafts. These should be studied, no doubt, but the final aim of education is Moksha or Mukti - the attainment of a Life Immortal, and not the worldly success and prosperity.

The ancient Indian educational system lays great stress on the absolute necessity of a personal relation between the teacher and the taught, which was famous as Gurukula. The relation between a teacher and his pupils is no more intimate than that between a speaker in a large meeting and his audience, and accordingly lacks entirely the feeling of living fellowship, the spirit of loving that alone can make education, with the two sides - teaching and learning- fruitful in any real sense of the term. Hence Gurukula system has always insisted on a close personal relation between teachers and students.

The total veneration and dedication of a student to his teacher is found in India in our ancient Gurukula system of education. Such Gurukulas were run by the Ṛṣis like Vasiṣṭha, Viśwāmitra, Yājñavalkya etc. Such centres were generally located in forests on the banks of rivers. The students - rich or poor, princes or commoners - used to go and live in the Ṛṣikula until they completed their education.

Our ancient Ṛṣis or seers were considered divine representatives dispersing vidyā or knowledge. The Ṛṣis obtained vidyā by the grace of God. A number of mantras were revealed to them in an 'अपौरुषेय' form (that is without human agency). And such mantras were imparted to their disciples in succession.

Women in our country have been very highly honoured right from the vedic age. They enjoyed respectful status in the family as well as in the society. In the field of education, the girls on par with the boys enjoyed equal opportunities. In ancient India, education meant vedic education. During this period, women were regarded competent for studying the vedic literature and participating in the sacrifices. No one could recite vedic prayers or perform vedic sacrifice without undergoing the upanayana ritual. This suggests that the upanayana might have been an obligatory ritual even for the girls in the vedic period as it was for boys.

In Ṛgveda, we find many hymns which have been visioned to female vedic seers. Some well known amongst them, famous for their spiritual attainments are Ghōṣā, Lopāmudrā, Romaśā and Apāla. In Ṛgveda (X.95), there are eighteen mantras in all containing a dialogue between Purūravā and Urvaśi. Out of these eighteen, Urvaśi is said to have composed nine mantras. The Ṛṣis of Ṛgveda (IX.104) were two daughters of Kaśyapa



named Śikhaṇḍīni and Apsaras. Both are considered to be Vaikalpika Ṛṣis. This clearly indicates that the standard of female education during that period was very high and excellent.

In Yajurveda, we find that women did not lag behind in the field of education. It has been desired that women may attain the best education, and their progeny may be well-educated and learned. It has been said that a child born of a learned mother is always happy in life.¹⁴ The educated women shared the responsibilities of their husbands and also discharged their household duties.

The *Atharva Veda* speaks high of the maiden who observed Brahmacharya discipline.¹⁵ This clearly states that a maiden wins a young husband through brahmacharya or Vedic studentship. This passage is a very important one, being the only Vedic passage which directly refers to women's right to studentship and education. This also indicates that the maidens in that age used to observe the vow of celibacy during the period of their education. The Atharvaveda pays high compliments to the women who were deeply engaged in learning.¹⁶

14. अवित्तादितिरुशर्मा - Yajurveda.X.9

15. ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम् ॥ - Atharva Veda XI.5.18

16. शुद्धाः पूता योषितो याज्ञिया इमा आपश्चरुमव सर्पन्तु शुभ्राः । - Atharva Veda XI.1.17

In the Upaniṣadic age, women began to take interest in philosophy. In Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, we find that Maitreyi, the wife of the celebrated sage Yājñavalkya exhibited her keenness to study the problem of metaphysics, viz., the immortality, rather than showing interest in the worldly riches.¹⁷ In another instance in the Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, Gārgi, a lady philosopher asked Yājñavalkya, a very subtle philosophical question. The sage there upon advised her in her interest not to insist on that question and on the advice of the sage, Gārgi agreed to withdraw.¹⁸

17. सा होवाच मैत्रेय्यत्रैव मा भगवानममूहन्न

प्रेत्य संज्ञास्तीति स होवाच याज्ञवल्क्यो न वा

अरेऽहं मोहं ब्रवीम्यलं वा अर इदं विज्ञानाय ॥ - Bṛhadarāṇya Upaniṣad.II.4.13

18. अथ हैनं गार्गी वाचकनवी पप्रच्छ । याज्ञवल्क्येति होवाच यदिदं सर्वमप्यतो च प्रोतं च कस्मिन्नु खल्वाप ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । वायौ गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु वायुरोताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । अपन्तरिक्षलोकेषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खल्वन्तरिक्षलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । गन्धर्वलोकेषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु गन्धर्वलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । आदित्यलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खल्वादित्यलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । चन्द्रलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु चन्द्रलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । नक्षत्रलोकेषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु नक्षत्रलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । देवलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु देवलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । इन्द्रलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खल्विन्द्रलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । प्रजापतिलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु प्रजापति लोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । ब्रह्मलोकोषु गार्गीति । कस्मिन्नु खलु ब्रह्मलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति । स होवाच गार्गी मातिप्राक्षीर्मा ते मूर्धा व्यपत्पदनतिप्रश्न्यां वै देवतामतिपृच्छासि गार्गि मातिप्राक्षीरिति । ततो ह गार्गी वाचकनयुपरराम ॥ - Bṛhadarāṇya Upaniṣad.III.6.1

In the Mahābhārata, we find Kunti well-versed in the use of the Atharva Vedic mantras which were kindly granted to her by a great vedic Brahmin in token of the service to him rendered by Kunti.

ततस्तामनवद्याङ्गी ग्राहयामास स द्विजः ।
मन्त्रग्रांमं तदा राजन्नथर्वाशीरसि श्रुतम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.305.20

During the Mahābhārata period, there were women versed not only in the highest philosophy but also in other branches of knowledge. Among the women of the royal families, many were well versed in politics. Gāndhārī's immortal saying, "यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः" has passed into a classic truth. She refused to wish success even to her own son Duryodhana as he was moving on the lines of Adharma. Instances are found in the Mahābhārata from which we can say that women of those days were taught arts like singing and dancing. Mādhavi, daughter of king Yayāti, was an expert in music, or Gāndharva Vidya -

बहुदेवासुरलोका बहुगन्धर्वदर्शना ।
बहुलक्षणसम्पन्ना बहुप्रसवधारिणी ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.116.3

Thus, it is clear that in the Mahābhārata, due attention was paid to the education of women, as a result of which, many women of those days were able to reach the highest

level of academic perfection. They also enjoyed equal rights with men in all spheres.

Religious Activities :

According to the ancient Hindu society, women were regarded as untouchable during her monthly period, and regarded them as religious impure, and temporarily untouchable. The complete isolation of women that was insisted upon during this period was partly due to the desire of ensuring complete rest which is so desirable for them during that period.

Marriage was the ideal recommended to society by vedic religion. It was the woman who managed the responsibility of the religious rituals in the family and she alone did the rites in the absence of her husband. The woman was not an impediment in the path of religion; her presence and co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. This naturally increased her religious value. Man could not become spiritually complete unless he was accompanied by his wife.¹⁹ Gods do not accept the oblations offered by a person who is not a Gṛhastha.²⁰ Wife was indispensable from the spiritual and religious points of view. Gṛahīṇī, in ancient India was known as Sahadharminī. In other

19. तस्मात्पुरुषो जायां वित्त्वा कृत्स्नतरमिवात्मानं मन्यते । - A.Br.I.2.5

20. अयङ्गीयो वैष योऽपत्नीकः । - Ś.Br.V.1.6.10

words, she was held to be with her husband not only physically but spiritually as well. In the vedic age, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges which men possessed. Her presence and co-operation were regarded necessary in religious rites and ceremonies.²¹ This principle was responsible for ensuring her a religious status as high as that of her husband. The husband and the wife are equal and necessary partners in divine worship. This principle implies that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities.

In the vedic age, the upanayana of girls used to take place as regularly as that of boys. After a few centuries, however, writers like Manu began to advocate that girls upanayana may be performed but no vedic mantras should be recited on the occasion.²² Manu also explicitly forbids a girl and a married woman to offer an agnihotra.²³ No sacrifice no fast was to be observed by women seperately from their husband.

21. या दंपती समनसा सुनुत आ च धावतः ।

देवासो नित्ययाशिरो । - Rg Veda VIII.31.5

22. अमन्त्रिता तु कार्येयं स्त्रीणामवृद्धशेषतः ।

संस्कारार्थं शरीरस्य यथाकालं यथाक्रमम् ॥ - Manu.II.66

23. न वै कन्या न युवतिर्नाल्पविद्यो न बालिशः ।

होता स्यादग्निहोत्रस्य नार्तो ना संस्कृतस्तथा ॥ - Manu.XI.36

नैव यज्ञक्रियाः कश्चिन्न श्राद्धं नोपवासकम् ।

या तु भर्तारि शुश्रूषा तथा स्वर्गं जयन्त्युत ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.22

Mahābhārata commands that for a woman her husband himself is her God. This is clear from the words of Brahmini and Draupadi.²⁴ Many people in modern India, do not accept this statement. Today also, this statement is controversial. The great sage Vyāsa already proved this through Jayadratha's character. Jayadratha was of the opinion that wise women worship their husbands, only if they possess wealth.

नैव प्राज्ञा गतश्रीकं भर्तारमुपयुज्यते ।

चुञ्जानमनुयुञ्जीत न श्रियः संक्षये वसेत् ॥

- Mbh.वन.267.15

As per the opinion of Jayadratha cited above, it seems that the wealth was more valued than the husband's character or qualities.

Sāvitri, on the strength of her penance and pātivratya

24. पतिशुश्रूषया धर्मो यः स मे रोचते द्विज ।

दैवतेष्वपि सर्वेषु भर्ता मे दैवतं परम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.30

पत्याश्रयो हि धर्मो मतः स्त्रीणां सनातनः ।

स देवः सा गतिर्नान्या तस्य का विप्रयं चरेत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.233.37

(fidelity to her husband) followed Yama (God of Death).²⁵ She talked with him²⁶ and by her sweet and intelligent words, she could win over Yama to bring her dead husband Satyavan back to life.²⁷ She also got boons from Yama for the eye-sight and the lost kingdom for her blind father-in-law²⁸ and hundred sons

25. सावित्री चैव दुःखार्ता यममेवान्वगच्छत ।

नियमव्रतसंसिद्धा महाभागा पतिव्रता ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.19

तपसा गुरुभक्त्या च भर्तुः स्नेहाद् व्रतेन च ।

तव चैव प्रसादेन न मे पतिहता गतिः ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.22

26. पतिव्रतासि सावित्रि तथैव च तपोऽन्विता ।

अतस्त्वामभिभाषामि विद्धि मां त्वं शुभे यमम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.12

27. वरं वृणे जीवतु सत्यवानयं

यथा मृता ह्येवमहं पतिं विना ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.52

28. च्युतः स्वराज्याद् दनवासमाश्रितो

विनष्टचक्षुः श्वशुरो ममाश्रमे ।

स लब्धचक्षुर्बलवान् भवेन्नृप-

स्तव प्रसादाज्ज्वलनार्कसंनिभः ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.27

हृतं पुरा मे श्वशुरस्य धीमतः ।

स्वयमेव राज्यं लभतां स पार्थिवः ।

जह्यात् स्वधर्मं न च मे गुरुर्यथा

द्वितीयमेतद् वरयामि ते वरम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.32

to her own²⁹ and hundred to her father who had no son.³⁰ Thus, she brought glory to both her families and became adorable.

Draupadi's devotion, purity and firm faith in God brought about the miracle. Yudhiṣṭhira, during the play of dice staked Draupadi and lost. Duhshāsana dragging her by her hair, brought to the royal assembly.³¹ When Duhshāsana started pulling Draupadi's sārī, she prayed to her God Kṛṣṇa to save her from this shameful peril.³² As every sārī was pulled and

29. ममात्मजं सत्यवतस्तथौरत्नं

भवेदुभाभ्यामिह यत् कोलुङ्गहम् ।

शतं सुतानां बलवीर्यशालिना-

मिदं चतुर्थं वरयामि ते वरम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.45

30. ममानपत्यः पृथिवीपतिः पिता

भवेत् पितुः पुत्रशतं तथौरसम् ।

कुलस्य सन्तानकरं च यद् भवेत्

तृतीयमेतद् वरयामि ते वरम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.38

31. स तां पराकृष्य सभासमीप

मानीय कृष्णामतिदीर्घकेशीम् ।

दुःशासनो नाथवतीमनाथव-

चकर्ष वायुः कदलीमिवार्ताम् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.67.31

32. आकृष्यमाणो वसने द्रौपद्याश्चिन्तितो हरिः ।

गोविन्द द्वारकावासिन् कृष्ण गोपीजनप्रिय ॥

कौरवैः परिभूतां मां किं न जानासि केशव ।

हे नाथ हे रामनाथ ब्रजनाथार्तिनाशन ।

कौरवार्णवमग्नां मामुद्धरस्व जनार्दन ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.41-42

fell on the ground a new sārī draped her.³³ Duhshāsana out of fatigue sat on the ground.³⁴ Impressed by this miracle Dhṛtarāshtra gave boons to Draupadi by which she and the Pāṇḍavas were free from the salvery of Kauravas and got back all that they had lost including their kingdom.³⁵

These above mentioned instances prove that always women prayed Gods during their difficulties, which is seen in

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33. ततस्तु धर्मोऽन्तरितो महात्मा
 समावृणोद् वै विविधैः सुवस्त्रैः
 आकृष्यमाणे वसने द्रौपद्यास्तु विशाम्यते ।
 तद्रूपमपरं वस्त्रं पादुरासीदनेकशः ॥
 नानारागविरागाणि वसनान्यथ वै प्रभो ।
 प्रादुर्भावान्ति शतशो धर्मस्य परिपालनात् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.46-48
34. यदा तु वाससां राशिः सभामध्ये समाचितः ।
 ततो दुःशासनः श्रान्तो व्रीडितः समुपाविशत् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.55
35. ददासि चेद् परं मङ्गं वृणोमि भरतर्षभ ।
 सर्वधर्मानुगः श्रीमानदासोऽस्तु युधिष्ठिरः ॥
 मनस्विनमजानन्तो मैवं ब्रूयुः कुमारकाः ।
 एष वै दासपुत्रो हि प्रतिविन्ध्यं ममात्मजम् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.28-29
- राजपुत्रः पुरा भूत्वा यथा नान्यः पुमान् क्वचित् ।
 राजभिर्ललितस्यास्य न युक्ता दासपुत्रता ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.30
- सरथौ सधनुष्कौ च भीमसेनधनंजयौ ।
 यमौ च परये राजन्नदासान् स्ववशानहम् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.32

present day also. This dedicated worship to God saves the worshipper from difficulty. No doubt, women have done greater service to religion than men by preserving the old religious tradition in Hindu society. So, men ought to be grateful to women for preserving it. An effort has to be made to spread the knowledge of principles of Hinduism among women so that they can become the representatives of our culture. Mahābhārata helps in attaining this goal.

Spiritual powers :

In the Mahābhārata, women, on the strength of their spiritual power acquired by pativratya, could save themselves in difficulties by cursing the guilty. When Damayanti, forsaken by Nala, was wandering alone in the forest, a lust-stricken hunter advanced towards her, and she like flame of fire, uttered the curse with the vow as "If I have never even mentally thought of any person other than Nala, may this mean hunter fall down dead." ³⁶ With this curse, the hunter fell down dead

36. स तु पापमतिः क्षुद्रः प्रघर्षयितुमातुरः ।

दुर्धृषां तर्कयामास दीप्तामग्निशिखामिव ॥

दमयन्ती तु दुःखार्ता प्रतिराज्यविनाकृता ।

अतीतवाक्यथे काले शशापैनं रुषान्विता ॥

यद्यहं नैषधादन्यं मनसापि न चिन्तये ।

तथायं पततां क्षुद्रो परासुर्मुग्गजीवनः ॥ - Mbh.वन.63.36-38

then and there only.³⁷ Similarly, she cursed Kali to face more difficulties than her husband Nala. With her curse,³⁸ Kali, who had taken resort in Nala, had to leave him.³⁹

Yudhiṣṭhira awed by the lustre of Gāndhārī's spiritual power was afraid of her curse which could burn down the Pāṇḍavas for killing her son by fraud.⁴⁰ When angrily

37. उक्तमात्रे तु वचने तथा स मृगजावनः ।

व्यसुः पपात मेदिन्यामग्निदग्ध इव द्रुमः ॥ - Mbh.वन.63.39

38. यस्याभिशापाद् दुःखार्ता दुःखं विन्दति नैषधः ।

तस्य भूतस्य नो दुःखाद् दुःखसप्यधिकं भवेत् ॥

अपापचेतसं पापो य एवं कृतवान् नलम् ।

तस्माद् दुःखतरं प्राप्य जीवत्वसुखजीविकाम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.63.16-17

39. इन्द्रसेनस्य जननी कुपिता माशपत् पुरा ।

यदा त्वया परित्यक्ता ततोऽहं भृशपीडितः ॥

अवसं त्वयि राजेन्द्र सुदुःखमपराजित ।

विषेण नागराजस्य दह्यमानो दिवानिशम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.72.34-35

ततो भीतः कलिः क्षिप्रं प्रविवेश बिभातकम् ।

कलिस्त्वन्यैस्तदादृश्यः कथयन् निषधेन वै ॥ - Mbh.वन.72.38

40. चिन्तयानो महाभागां गान्धारीं तपसान्विताम् ।

घोरेण तपसा युक्तां त्रैलोक्यमपि सा दहेत् ॥

तस्य चिन्तयमानस्य बुद्धिः समभवत् तदा ।

गान्धार्याः क्रोधदीप्तायाः पूर्वं प्रशमन् भवेत् ॥

सा हि पुत्रवधं श्रुत्वा कृतमस्माभिरीदृशम् ।

मानसेनाग्निना क्रुद्धा भस्मसान्नः करिष्यति ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.63.10-12 ⇨

summoned by her, he nervously fell down at her feet and she could see through the covering on her eyes, only the nails of his toes which turned black by her sight.⁴¹ For ignoring the tremendous loss of life in the war, though she had the power to stop. She cursed Kṛṣṇa that his family would also be destroyed completely by internal feuds.⁴² During Mahābhārata period, women had the power to curse which never failed. But women used it with great caution and self control. People

⇒ सा हि नित्यं महाभागा तपसोग्रेण कर्षिता ।

पुत्रपौत्रवधं श्रुत्वा ध्रुवं नः सम्प्रधक्ष्यति ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.63.24

41. तस्यावनतदेहस्य पादयोर्निपतिष्यः ।

युधिष्ठिरस्य नृपतेर्धर्मज्ञा दीर्घदर्शिनी ॥

अंगुल्यग्रणि ददृशे देवी पट्टान्तरेण सा ।

ततः स कुनखीभूतो दर्शनीयनखो नृपः ॥ - Mbh.स्त्री.15.29-30

42. पतिशुश्रूषया यन्मे तपः किञ्चिदुपार्जितम् ।

तेन त्वां दुखापेन शप्स्ये चक्रगदाधर ॥

यस्मात् परस्परं घ्नन्तो ज्ञातयः कुरुपाण्डवा ।

उपेक्षितास्ते गोविन्द तस्माज्ज्ञातीन् वधिष्यसि ॥

त्वमप्युपस्थिते वर्षे षट्त्रिंशे मधुसूदन ।

हतज्ञातिर्हतामात्यो हतपुत्रो वनेचरः ।

अनाथवदविज्ञातो लोकेष्वनभिलक्षितः ।

कुत्सितेनाभ्युपायेन निधनं समवाप्स्यसि ॥

तवाप्येवं हतसुता निहतज्ञातिबान्धवाः ।

स्त्रियः परिपतिष्यन्ति यथैता भरतस्त्रियः ॥ - Mbh.स्त्री.25.42-46

were afraid of the extra-ordinary power of such highly evolved women.

In the Mahābhārata, another woman Brāhmani, who cursed Kalmāṣapāda is an example of a lady who had extra-ordinary power. In the course of his wanderings through the forest as a Rākṣana, Kalmāṣapāda happened to come across a Brāhmaṇa youth engaged in amorous pleasures with his wife Āṅgirasi.⁴³ The king caught hold of the youth and killed him.⁴⁴ His wife, the Brāhmṇi wept loudly and after cremating her husband's body in a funeral pyre, jumped into it and burnt herself to death.⁴⁵ Just before her death she pronounced a curse on Kalmāṣapāda that if he touched any woman in future he would die immediately.⁴⁶ The curse of great women never failed.

43. स कदाचित् क्षुधाविष्टो मृगयन् भक्ष्यमात्मनः ।

ददर्श सुपरिक्लिष्टः कस्मिंश्चिन्निर्जने वने ॥

ब्राह्मणं ब्राह्मणीं चैव मिथुनायोपसंगतौ ।

तौ तं वीक्ष्य सुवित्रस्तावकृतार्थो प्रधवितौ ॥ - Mbh.आदि.181.9-10

44. भर्तारं भक्षयामास व्याघ्रो मृगमिवेप्सितम् ।

तस्याः क्रोधाभिभूताया यान्यश्रूण्यपतन् भुवि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.181.16

45. एवं शप्त्वा तु राजानं सा तमाङ्गिरसी शुभा ।

तस्यैव संनिधौ दीप्तं प्रविवेश ह्युताशनम् ॥ - Mbh.आदि.181.22

46. कल्माषपादं राजर्षिमशपद् ब्रह्मणी रुषा ।

यस्मान्ममाकृतार्थास्त्वया क्षुद्र नृशंसवत् ॥ ⇨

While the pāndavas were leading forest life, the hermit Mārkaṇḍeya told the story of a noble Brahmin named Kauśika to Dharmaputra. Once this Brahmin burnt down the bird with anger only by looking at it, as the bird had passed excreta on the head of the Brahmin. Once he reached the house of a Brahmin for alms. The wife of the Brahmin asked him to wait for sometime as she was busy in serving her husband. The Brahmin got angry and spoke cruel words to her. She argued that the noblest deed was to look after her husband. She requested her to forgive her as she considered her husband greater than God.⁴⁷

The wife of the Brahmin with her divine vision acquired by pātrivratya could see the past action of Kauśika, that he burnt down the bird.⁴⁸

⇒ प्रेक्षन्त्या भक्षितो मेऽद्य प्रियो भर्ता महायशाः ।

तस्मात् त्वमपि दुर्बुद्धे मच्छापपरिविक्षितः ॥

पत्नीमृतावनुप्राप्य सद्यस्त्यक्ष्यसि जीवितम् ।

यस्य चर्षेर्वसिष्ठस्य त्वया पुत्रा विनाशिताः ॥

तेन संगम्य ते भार्या तनयं जनयिष्यति ।

स ते वंशकरः पुत्रो भविष्यति नृपाधम ॥ - Mbh.आदि.181.18-21

47. क्षन्तुमर्हसि मे विद्वन् भर्ता मे दैवतं परम् ।

न चापि श्रान्तः प्राप्तः शुश्रूषितो मया ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.20

48. नाहं बलाका विप्रर्षे त्यज क्रोधं तपोधन ॥

अनया क्रुद्धया दृष्ट्या क्रुद्धः किं मां करिष्यसि ।

नावजनाम्हयं विप्रान् देवैस्तुल्यान् मनस्विनः ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.23-24 ⇒

She advised him that no Brahmin should get angry immediately. Her words explain the duty of a Brahmin which are most inspiring.⁴⁹

Social Activites :

In ancient times, the social status largely depended upon religious privileges and disabilities of women. The ideal before women in social life was to help society in procuring prosperity in peace and victory in war. The war of expansion required a numerous army; women cheerfully accepted the responsibility of rearing a large family. In Yajurveda, it is clearly stated that the women had a prestigious place in society.⁵⁰

⇒ अविशेषेण तस्याहं कुर्यां धर्मं द्विजोत्तम ।

शुश्रूषायाः फलं पश्य पत्युर्ब्रह्मण यादृशम् ॥

बलाका हि त्वया दिग्धा रोषात् तद् विदितं मया । - Mbh.वन.206.31-32

49. अपेयः सागरः क्रोधात् कृतो हि लवणोदकः ।

तथैव दीप्ततपसां मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् ॥

येषां क्रोधाग्निरद्यापि दण्डके नोपशम्यति ।

ब्राह्मणानां परिभवाद वातापिः सुदुरात्मवान् ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.26-27

स्वाध्यायवानमत्तो वै तं देवा ब्राह्मणं विदुः ।

यद् ब्राह्मणानां कुशलं तदेषां परिकीर्तयेत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.38

50. तस्मै नमन्तां जनयः सुपत्नीर्मातेव पुत्रं बिभृताप्स्वेनम् ॥ - Yajurveda.12.35

The vedic marriage hymn requires the bride to be shown to all the assembled guests at the end of the marriage ritual.⁵¹ The hope was further expressed that the bride should be able to speak with composure in public assemblies down to her old age.⁵² The presence of ladies in social and public gatherings was a normal feature. In vedic times, this was quite welcomed in the society.⁵³

During Mahābhārata period, some kind of purda was observed in certain royal families, which was probably on account of a notion of prestige, that royal ladies should not come within the sight of vulgar eyes. This type of observation occurs in the Mahābhārata at the time of Dhritarāstra's departure to forest.

या नापश्यच्चन्द्रमा नैव सूर्यो रामाः काश्चित्ताः सा तस्मिन्नेन्द्रे ।

महावनं गच्छति कौरवोन्द्रे शोकेनार्ता राजमार्गं प्रपेदुः ॥

- Mbh.आश्रमवासिक.15.13

51. सुमंगलीरियं वधूरिमां समेत पश्यत ।

सौभाग्यमस्यै दत्त्वायाथास्तं वि परेतन ॥ - Rg Veda X.85,33

52. वशिनी त्वं विदथमावदासि । - Rg Veda X.85,26

अथ जिब्रिर्विदथमावदासि । - Atharva Veda XIV.1,21

53. जुष्टा नरेषु समनेषु बलुः ।- Atharva Veda II.36,1

From this it is clear that women in those days were in the habit of avoiding themselves from mixing in the public. This type of behaviour of the women is also seen in the ancient period prior to Mahābhārata. Women who felt themselves to be in helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardians, and of married women, whose husbands had gone out on a journey.⁵⁴

During the Mahābhārata period women were an important member of the society. There were occasions when women came in contact with outsiders. The king was made responsible for the safety of women. The king was to be more careful for the safety of maidens when the country was attacked by enemies.

In the social structure also, the killing of a woman was banned right from the very ancient times. In the Mahābhārata, in the words of Brāhmin's wife, and in so many instructions, slaying of a woman was a great sin.

कायव्य उवाच -

मा वधीस्त्वं स्त्रियं भीरुं मा शिशुं मा तपस्विनम् ।
नायुद्ध्यमानो हन्तव्यो न च ग्राह्या बलात् स्त्रियः ॥

54. क्रीडां शरीरसंस्कारं समाजोत्सवदर्शनम् ।

हास्यं परिगृहे यानं त्यजेत्प्रोषितभर्तृका ॥ Yājñavalkya.I.84

सर्वथा स्त्री न हन्तव्या सर्वसत्त्वेषु केनचित् ।

- Mbh.शान्ति.135.13-14

तथा स्त्रियं च यो हन्ति बालं वृद्धं तथैव च ।

विरथं विप्रकीर्णं च भग्नशस्त्रायुधं तथा ॥

- Mbh.वन.18.14

Though the killing of a woman was sinful, there were exceptions in a man's case but never in a woman's. The feeling against the killing of women is so strong that the Brāhmin woman of Ekacakrā hoped that the rāksasa Baka, being conversant with the Aryan law would not kill her.⁵⁵

During the Mahābhārata period, women had along with freedom, restrictions to keep them safe from perils, and to maintain a high moral standard of the society. Thus, by establishing freedom and restriction according to circumstances, an attempt was made to keep the society's purity intact.

Economical Activities :

Right through the ages, the status of Hindu women in society is changing. They had the privilege of leading a full

55. अवध्यां स्त्रियमित्याहुर्धर्मज्ञा धर्मनिश्चये ।

धर्मज्ञान् राक्षसानाहुर्न हन्यात् स च मामपि ॥

निस्संशयं वधः पुंसां स्त्रीणां संशयितो वधः ।

अतो मामेव धर्मज्ञ प्रस्थापयितुमर्हसि ॥ - Mbh.आदि.157.31-32

family life as long as the desire to do so was there; but this they got at the cost of their economic rights. However, they won economic independence and lead a successful life.

The proprietary position of women in Hindu law may be determined with reference to its rules concerning their dominion over diverse items in the household. Manu mentions several lawful means of acquisition of property.⁵⁶ Property rights of women were hardly recognized in ancient India. They themselves were looked upon as an item of the movable property of the husband or the patriarch. In vedic age, wife was generally regarded as the co-owner of the family property along with her husband as the term Dampati would show. The husband was required to take a solemn vow at the time of marriage that he would never transgress the rights and interests of his wife in economic matters.

सूर्याया वहतुः प्रागात् सविता यमवासृजत् ।

अघ्रासु हन्यन्ते गावो ऽर्जुन्यो पर्युह्यते ॥

- Rg Veda X.85.13

Regarding the theory of joint ownership of the couple, Yājñavalkya concedes to wife a third of the husband's property,

56. सप्त वित्तगमा धर्म्या दायो लाभः क्रयो जयः ।

प्रयोगः कर्मयोगश्च सत्प्रतिग्रह एव च ॥ - Manu.X.115

in case she was superseded unjustly.⁵⁷ A wedding hymn in the R̥gveda containing two verses indicates that gifts were sent with the bride to the bridegroom's house.⁵⁸

Women were given away as gifts in the vedic age, as would appear from several hymns, which glorify the gifts of generous donors.⁵⁹ In the Mahābhārata, we find Dhritārashtra proposing to give hundred female slaves of Kṛṣṇā as a token of his regard for him.

दासीनामप्रजातानां शुभानां रूक्मवर्चसाम् ।
शतमस्मै प्रदास्यामि दासानामपि तावताम् ॥

- Mbh. उद्योग. 86.8

The husband was deemed to have a natural proprietary rights in the wife. It is on this undisputed assumption that Dharma proceeds to stake Draupadi in the gambling hall. Even this proud queen does not think of disputing this right of her husbands, when she is dragged to the court of Dhritarāshtra. She did not think that she had lost her freedom because the

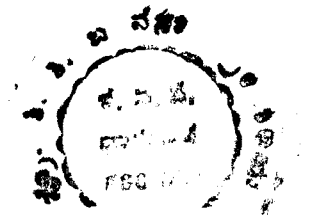
57. आज्ञासंपादिनीं दक्षा वीरसूं प्रियवादिनीम् ।

त्यजन्दाप्यस्तृतीयांशमद्रव्यो भरणं स्त्रियः ॥ - Yājñavalkya.II.76

58. सोमो आसन् प्रतिधयः कुरीरं छन्द ओपशः ।

सूर्याया अश्विनो बराऽग्निरासीत् पुरोगवः ॥ - R̥g Veda X.85.8

59. उप मा श्यावा स्वनयेन दत्ता बधूमन्तो दश रयासोऽस्थुः । - R̥g Veda V.I.126.3



husband has no right to sell or stake away his wife. She only wanted to know whether her husband was a free man, when he had staked her.

किं नु पूर्व पराजैषीरात्मानमथवा नु माम् ।

- Mbh.सभा.67.7

In the Mahābhārata period, women of respectable families were not expected to earn money, on the other hand a man living on the earnings of a woman was condemned. Draupadi did the service and earned money, but this was allowed for women of noble families only at the time of adversity. Draupadi had complete knowledge of the vast treasury of her husbands.

सर्वे राज्ञः समुदयमायं च व्ययमेव च ।

एकाहं वेद्मि कल्याणि पाण्डवानां यशस्विनि ॥

- Mbh.वन.233.53

अधृष्यं वरुणस्येव निधिपूर्णमिवोदधिम् ।

एकाहं वेद्मि कोशं वै पतीनां धर्मचारिणाम् ॥

- Mbh.वन.233.56

In the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, when Nala was losing in the gambling with Puṣkara, it was Damayanti who sent information to the ministers about how much was lost and how much remained.

बृहत्सेने ब्रजामात्यानानाय्य नलशासनात् ।
आचक्ष्व यद्धृतं द्रव्यमवशिष्टं च यद् वसु ॥

- Mbh.वन.60.5

And when the loss was complete, she started planning for the future.

शरणं त्वां प्रपन्नास्मि सारथे कुरु मद्रचः ।
न हि मे शुध्यते भावः कदाचिद् निवशेदपि ॥
नलस्य दयितानश्वान् योजयित्वा मनोजवान् ।
इदमारोप्य मिथुनं कुण्डिनं यातुमर्हसि ॥
मम ज्ञातिषु निक्षिप्य दारकौ स्यन्दनं तथा ।
अश्वांश्चेमान् यथाकामं वस वान्यत्र गच्छ वा ॥

- Mbh.वन.60.18-20

Thus, the woman, though not an earning member of the family, was an important asset in monetary matters during the Mahābhārata period.

The Mahābhārata states that the assembly began to hiss loudly when king Yudhiṣṭhira proceeded to stake his wife in the gambling hall.⁶⁰ According to Draupadi, only intoxicated or inhuman persons could think of exercising it.⁶¹

60. एवमुक्ते तु वचने धर्मराजेन धीमता ।

धिग्धिगित्येव वृद्धानां सभ्यानां विस्मिता गिरः ॥ - Mbh.सभा.86.40

61. कथं त्वेवं वदसि प्रातिकामिन् को हि दिव्येद् भार्यया राजपुत्रः ।

मूढो राजा ब्रूतमदेन मत्तो ह्यभून्नान्यत् कैतवस्य किञ्चित् ॥ - Mbh.सभा.67.5

Another woman character mentioned in the Udyoga parva of the Mahābhārata, Vidulā advised her son to earn *Dharma* and *Artha*. She told that wealth comes and goes. So, man should always try to protect his wealth and also to earn back the lost wealth by *Dharma*.⁶² The Smṛti writers declared that women and children can not be the objects of gift or sale under any circumstances.⁶³

Daughter's Right for Inheritance :

In the later vedic literature, we find the view that women have no right for inheritance.⁶⁴ In the third mandala of Ṛgveda, we find a verse in which a brother is advised that he should not give any share of his wealth to his sister as she is, after all, to migrate to a different family.⁶⁵ The evidence of Ṛgveda and Taittiriya Samhita referred above shows that the practice of the division of property amongst sons were well-established in the vedic age.

62. पुत्रं नात्मावमन्तव्यः पूर्वाभिरसमृद्धिभिः ।

अभूत्वा हि भवन्त्यर्था भूत्वा नश्यन्ति चापरे ॥

अमर्षेणैव चाप्यर्था नारब्धव्याः सुबलिराशौः ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग.135.25

63. स्वं कुटुम्बावरोधेन देयं दारसतादृते । - Yājñavalkya.II.175

64. तस्मात्स्त्रियो निरिन्द्रिया अदायादीः । - T.S.VI.5.8.2

ता (स्त्रियः) नात्मनश्चैशत न दायस्य चैशत । - Ś.Br.IV.4,2,13

65. न जामये तान्वो रिक्तमारैक चकार गर्भं सनितुर्निधानम् । - Ṛg Veda III.31.2

In the earlier period, however, girls were fairly educated, and very often they would remain unmarried either by choice or by the force of circumstances. A vedic stanza expressly refers to an old maiden claiming her share in her patrimony.⁶⁶

When marriage became obligatory for girls, it was naturally laid down that reasonable expenses in connection with them should be a charge on the family property. If a father died before the marriage of his daughter, the sons were bound to spend reasonable amounts for their suitalbe marriages, out of the joint family property. A general rule, however, has been laid down that a brother should spend for his sister's marriage an amount equal to one-fourth share.⁶⁷

Among the female heirs, the brotherless daughter was the first to succeed in establishing her right of inheritance. For all religious purposes, the father during vedic age could regard a

66. अमाजूरिव पित्रोः सचा सती समानादा ।

सदसस्त्वमिये भगम् ।

कृधि प्रकेतमुप मास्या भर ददि भागं

तान्वा येन मामहः ॥ - Rg Veda II.17.7

67. असंस्कृतास्तु संस्कार्या भ्रातृभिः पूर्वसंस्कृतैः ।

भगिन्यश्च निजादंशादृत्वांशं तु तुरीयकम् ॥ - Yājñavalkya.II.124

स्वेभ्यो अंशेभ्यस्तु कन्याभ्यः प्रददुर्भातरः पृथक् ।

स्वात्स्वादेशाच्चतुर्भागं पतिताः स्युरदित्सवः ॥ - Manu.IX.118

daughter to be as good as a son. He had a strong prejudice against adopting a son.⁶⁸ He therefore, preferred property passing to his own daughter in preference to a stranger, who by a religious fiction, was to be regarded as an adoptive son. He could also usually arrange for the reputation of his own family by making an agreement with the son-in-law that he should send back his first son to continue his maternal grandfather's family. One of the early hymns of R̥gveda refers to a brotherless daughter getting her share in patrimony.⁶⁹ The vedic age puts a high premium on the son, and sons-in-law were unwilling to allow their first born son (ज्येष्ठपुत्रः) to revert back to the families of their maternal grandfathers. In those times, marriage was not easy for a brotherless daughter and she often remained a spinster.⁷⁰

The Mahābhārata maintains that, it would be manifestly unfair and unequitable to allow a subsidiary son to get an inheritance when there was a daughter to claim it.

यथैवात्मा तथा पुत्रः पुत्रेण दुहिता समा ।

तस्यामात्मनि तिष्ठन्त्यो कथमन्यां धनं हरेत् ॥

- Mbh. अनुशासन. 80.11

68. न हि प्रभायारणः स्रशेवोऽन्योदार्यो मनसा मन्तवा उ । - R̥g Veda VII.4.8

69. अभ्रातेव पुंस एति प्रतीची गर्तारुगिव सनये धनानाम् । - R̥g Veda I.124,7

70. अमूर्याः सन्ति जामयः सर्वा लाहितवाससः ।

अभ्रातर इव योवास्तिष्ठन्तु हतवर्त्मनः ॥ - Atharva Veda I.17.1

दुहितान्यत्र जाताद्धि पुत्रादपि विशिष्यते ॥

She must get atleast half the property; if not the whole.⁷¹

It is known from the Mahābhārata, that women are the wealth of the house and hence they are to be respected.

श्रिय एताः स्त्रियो नाम सत्कार्या भूतिमिच्छता ।
पालिता निगृहीता च श्रीः स्त्री भवति भारत ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.46.15

It states that a son is entitled to get a part of money from his mother which is given to her as *stridhana* by her husband.⁷² But if a brahmin's wife gets some money from her father, only her daughter is eligible to get it.

स्त्रियास्तु यद् भवेद् वित्तं पित्रा दत्तं युधिष्ठिर ।
ब्राह्मण्यास्तद्धरेत् कन्या यता पुत्रस्तथा हि सा ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.25

A man should earn money according to Dharma, and should use it in performing Yajña and other religious

71. अभ्रातृका समग्रार्हा चार्धाहेत्यपरे विदुः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.88.22

72. स्त्रीणां तु पतिदायाद्यमुपभोगफलं स्मृतम् ।

नापहारं स्त्रियः कुर्युः पतिवित्तात् कथंचन ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.24

activities.⁷³ It is told previously, that according to the Mahābhārata, a kṣatriya wife is not equal to a brāhmin wife. So, a brāhmin's wife's son is greater than the son of a kṣatriya wife, and gets a major part of his father's property.

न तु जात्या समा लोके ब्राह्मण्याः क्षत्रिया भवेत् ।

ब्राह्मण्याः प्रथमः पुत्रो भवान् स्याद् राजसत्तम ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.38

भूयो भूयोऽपि संहार्यः पितृवित्ताद् युधिष्ठिर ।

Widow's right of Inheritance :

In early times, the custom of niyoga was very common; so widows without sons were very few. A vast majority of widows therefore used to get their husband's shares, if not directly as their heirs, at least indirectly as the guardians of their minor sons. Very often they used to marry, and so the question of giving them a share in their dead husband's property would not arise at all. Manu lays down that the property of a sonless person will first devolve upon his father, then upon his brother, and finally upon a sapinda and a sakulya in accordance to his propinquity. When none of these is forthcoming, first a preceptor, then a disciple, and finally

73. एवमेव समुद्दिष्टो धर्मो वै भरतर्षभ ।

एवं धर्ममनुसृत्य न वृथा साधयेत् धनम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.26

the king should take it away.⁷⁴ Further Manu recognises the mother also as the heir,⁷⁵ the widow is however, nowhere mentioned as possessing any right of inheritance. In the Anuśāsana parva of Mahābhārata, it is stated that the widow can only utilise the income of the property she has inherited; she can under no circumstances dispose it.

स्त्रीणां तु पतिदायाद्यमुपभोगफलं स्मृतम् ।

नापहारं स्त्रियः कुर्युः पतिवित्तात्कथंचन ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.24

Yājñavalkya allows the widowed mother a share equal to that of her son.⁷⁶

The Mahābhārata allows a husband to give his wife three thousand coins⁷⁷ The wealth thus given to the wife could be

74. पिता हरेदपुत्रस्य रिक्थं भ्रातर एव च ।

अनन्तरः सपिण्डाद्यस्तस्य तस्य हरेद्धनम् ।

अत ऊर्ध्वं सकुल्यः स्यादाचार्यः शिष्य एव वा ॥ - Manu.X.185,187

75. अनपत्यस्य पुत्रस्य माता दायमवाप्नुयात् । - Manu.IX.217

76. यदि कुर्यात्समानं शान्पत्यः कार्याः समांशिकाः ।

न दत्तं स्त्रीधनं यासां भर्त्रा वा स्वशुरेण वा ॥ - Yājñavalkya.I.115

पितुरुर्ध्वं विभजतां माताप्यंशं समं हरेत् - Yājñavalkya.II.123

77. त्रिसहस्रपरो दायः स्त्रियै देयो धनस्य वै ।

भर्त्रा तच्च धनं दत्तं यथार्हं भोक्तुमर्हति ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.23

spent or disposed off by her as she liked. However, the position of the widow was secured to some extent socially as well as economically. Though the practice of niyoga is recognised in the Mahābhārata, protection of the widow was considered a king's duty.

Political Activities :

Women not only in family life, but also in war field showed their ability, strength and power and proved themselves as सहधर्मिणी, सहकर्मिणी and सहयोगिनी.⁷⁸ In the vedic period, women were not considered as weak persons. They could teach lessons to the wicked and cruel persons.⁷⁹ In Ṛgveda, we find two women Mudgalāni⁸⁰ and Viśpālyā.⁸¹ There were democratic assemblies in the vedic age. The marriage hymn expresses the hope that the bride would be able to speak with composure

78. संहोत्रं स्म पुरा नारी समनं वाव गच्छति । - Atharva Veda XV.126.10

इन्द्राण्येतु प्रथमाजीतायुषिता पुरः ॥ Ibid.I.27.4

79. अवीरामिव मामयं शरारुभि मन्यते ।

उताहमस्मि वीरिणीन्द्रपत्नी मरुत्सखा विश्वस्मादिन्द्र उत्तरः । - Atharva Veda XX.126.9

80. उत् स्म वातो वहति वासो अस्या अधिरथं यदजयत् सहस्रम् ।

रथीरभून्मुद्गलानि गविष्ठौ भरे कृतं व्यचेदिन्द्रसेना ॥ - Ṛg Veda X.102.2

81. याभिर्विशपलां धनसामथर्व्यं सहस्रमीह आज्ञावजिन्वताम् ।

याभिर्विशनश्च्यं प्रेणिमावतं ताभिरु षु ऊतिभिरश्विना गतम् ॥ - Ṛg Veda I.112.10

and success in the public assemblies down to her old age.⁸² It is thus probable that some ladies used to take an effective part in public discussions of the democratic assemblies of the age. In the later vedic period, the state of affairs changed; it is expressly informed that women do no longer go to public assemblies.⁸³

Political thinkers were not unanimous as to whether it is desirable to permit women to become rulers of the state. In the Mahābhārata, Bhiṣma advised Yudhiṣṭira to sanction the coronations of the daughters of those kings, who had died in the war and left behind no male issues.

कुमारो नास्ति येषां च कन्यास्तत्राभिषेचय ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.32.33

During ancient period it was held that women should not be made rulers, for on account of their natural limitations, they cannot become efficient administrators.

यत्र स्त्री कितवो बालो यत्रानुशासिता ।

मज्जन्ति तेऽवशा राजन्नद्वामश्मप्लवा इव ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.38.43

82. वशिनी त्वं विदथमावदासि । - Rg Veda X.85.26

83. तस्मात्पुमांसः सभां यांति न स्त्रियः । - Manu.IV.7,4

Hindu kingdom under lady regents were usually well governed. Hindu queens were not mere head of government, but used to actively guide and supervise the state administration. They used to exercise a good deal of influence on the administration even when their husbands were ruling. They were often entrusted with most delicate missions and their advice was eagerly awaited.

In the Mahābhārata, Draupadi was aware of the strength of her husbands, and thus was always exhorting them for war. When Kṛṣṇa was going to the Kauravas for peace-talks, she became angry and urged him not to forgive Duryodhana and suggested him not to talk of peace. She remembered the insult which Dushāsana had done to her by dragging her hair in the court of Hastinapura. So, she asked Kṛṣṇa to remember this incident while talking of peace.⁸⁴ She showed Kṛṣṇa her united hair with the following strong words. "Fie upon Arjuna's valour and Bhiṣma's strength if Duryodhana is alive even for a moment.⁸⁵ If my husbands through cowardice, do not fight, then my old father with the help of his brave sons and my five

84. अयं ते पुण्डरीकाक्ष दुःशासनकोद्धतः ।

स्मर्तव्यः सर्वकार्येषु परेषां सन्धिमिच्छता ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.82.36

85. धिक् पार्थस्य धनुष्मतां भीमसेनस्य धिग् बलम् ।

यत्र दुर्योधनः कृष्ण मुहूर्तमपि जीवति ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.82.31

sons under the leadership of Abhimanyu will fight."⁸⁶ She said that she had nobody not even Kṛṣṇa as all of them were ingoring her insult. She was consoled by Kṛṣṇa and Dhrishtadyumna by taking a vow of Kauravas' destruction.

Kunti's special message to her sons for war was inspiring. "The time has come for which a kṣatriya woman gives birth to sons. If necessary, one should give one's life" etc.

यदर्थं क्षत्रिया सूते तस्य कालोऽयमागतः ॥

- Mbh. उद्योग.90.75

अस्मिंश्चेदागते काले मिथ्या चतक्रमिष्यति ।

लोकसम्भाविताः सन्तः सुनृशंसं करिष्यथ ॥

नृशंसेन च वो युक्तांस्त्यजेयं शाश्वतीः समाः ।

काले हि समानुप्राप्ते त्यक्तव्यमपि जीवनम् ॥

- Mbh. उद्योग.90.75-77

Kunti also sent message to Yudhiṣṭhira, stating that a king should rule his country with dharma by which he gains the power of God. If he rules with adharma, he attains hell.⁸⁷

86. यदि भीमार्जुनौ कृष्ण कृपणौ सन्धिकामुकौ ।

पिता मे योत्स्यते वृद्धः सह पुत्रैर्महारथैः ॥

पञ्च चैव महावीर्याः पुत्र मे मधुसूदन ।

अभिमन्युं पुरस्कृत्य योत्स्यन्ते कुरुभिः सह ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग.82.37-38

87. राजा चरति चेद् धर्मं देवत्वायैव कल्पते ।

स चेदधर्मं चरति नरकायैव गच्छति ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग.132.13

She also said that a king should use Dandāniti in such a way that it should keep him away from adharmā.⁸⁸

Finally, Kunti concluded that a king is responsible for the condition of his country.⁸⁹

Another woman character in Mahābhārata Vidulā, while emboldening her son to war said that kṣatriyas are created only for victory and war. They should earn victory or else, they should be killed in war.⁹⁰

Woman was often considered as the main cause of the war. According to the words heard from the sky, Draupadi's birth itself was for the destruction of kṣatriyas.⁹¹ Thus, women though considered as unfit to take part in war, they played a very important role in political field by inspiring or encouraging their husbands and sons to fight for victory in the war.

88. दण्डनीतिः स्वधर्मेण चातुर्वर्ण्यं नियच्छति ।

प्रयुक्ता स्वामिना सम्यग्धर्मेभ्यश्च यच्छति ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.132.14

89. कालो वा कारणं राज्ञो राजा वा कालकारणम् ।

इति ते संशयो मा भूद् राजा कालस्य कारणम् ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.132.16

90. युद्धाय क्षत्रियः सृष्टः संजयेह जयाय च ॥

जयन् वा बध्यमानो वा प्राप्नोतीन्द्रसलोकताम् ।

न शक्रभवने पुण्ये दिवि तद् विद्यते सुखम् ।

यदमित्रान् वशे कृत्वा क्षत्रियः सुखमश्नुते ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.135.13-14

91. Explained in chapter II under polyandry.

Chapter - IV

Female Deities in the Mahābhārata

Ancient people worshipped God and continued through the ages, believing that God is above all other things. God is not a private idea of man that exists only in his notion, but is objectively real. In ancient India, it was believed that the favour of Gods can be brought by gifts. They believed that the one that is offered to God is sacred and that which is sacred is divine. It was stated that the God is himself the offering which was made to him. The worshippers' idea of God necessarily determines the spirit in which he worships. People worshipped God with adoration, thinking that worship without adoration is a worship only in name, or rather it is no worship at all. People prayed God in difficulties. Prayers offered at the time of trouble, were not the only prayers offered by the early man. Man's wishes are not limited since ancient times. So, to escape from calamity is not the only thing for which man is capable of wishing and praying. Prayers are offered to him thinking that man's cry reaches him. It is believed that God will listen to the prayers offered in the right spirit and bless the man to fulfill his desires or demands.

In the Mahābhārata, Gods are mentioned and their icons were worshipped at home and in temples. But names or descriptions of those Gods and Goddesses are not available,

but their information can be collected from the prayers offered to them. Some deities are explained below.

Durgā :

The Goddess Durga is described as the Goddess of universe. According to the prayer of devotees, this Devi is worshipped in 64 forms as Āryadurgā, Vedagarbhā, Ambikā, Bhadrakālī, Bhadrā, Kṣemākṣemakari, Naikabāhu, Devi etc. Worshipping Devi is supposed to be more than 4000 years old in India. Since primitive times, Goddess Devi occupies an important place in religious literature.¹ Goddess Durgā is prayed by Yudhiṣṭhira while going to the beautiful city Virāṭa. She is born as the daughter of Nanda, sister of Kṛṣṇa. She does good to all and kills the asurās.² She is called "Kṛishṇā" as

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1. Cf. Vettem Maṇi, Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1975, Page No.254
 2. यशोदागर्भसम्भूतां नारायणवरप्रियाम् ।
 नन्दगोपकुले जातां मङ्गल्यां कुलवर्धिनीम् ॥
 कंसविद्रावणकरीमसूराणां क्षयंकरीम् ।
 शिलातटविनिक्षिप्तामाकाशं प्रति गामिनीम् ॥
 वासुदेवस्य भगिनी दिव्यमाल्यविभूषिताम् ।
 दिव्याम्बरधरां देवीं खड्गखेटकधारिणीम् ॥ - Mbh.विराट.6.2-4
 नमोस्तु वरदे कृष्णे कुमारि ब्रह्मचारिणी ।
 बालार्कसदृशाकारे पूर्णचन्द्रनिभानने ॥ - Mbh.विराट.6.7

she appears lustrous in her black complexion.³ By the power of her Brahmacharya, she purified all the three lokas.⁴ So all Gods pray and worship her. To protect all the three lokas, she killed Mahishāsurā.⁵ She is described as the Goddess of victory in wars.⁶ She blesses the man with son or wealth who prays her. For that man nothing is impossible in this world.

प्रणमन्ति च ये त्वां हि प्रभाते तु नरा भुवि ।
न तेषां दुर्लभं किञ्चित् पुत्रतो धनतोऽपि वा ॥

- Mbh.विराट.6.19

She is called by name Durgā, as she destroys sorrow (दुःख)⁷ when Yudhiṣṭhira prayed her in many ways, she appeared before him and gave him the boon for victory and acquisition of kingdom.⁸

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3. कृष्णच्छविसमा कृष्णा संकर्षणसमानना । - Mbh.विराट.6.9
 4. कौमारं व्रतास्थाय त्रिदिवं पावितं त्वया ॥ - Mbh.विराट.6.14
 5. त्रैलोक्यरक्षणार्थाय महिषासुरनाशिनि । - Mbh.विराट.6.15
 6. जया त्वं विजया चैव संग्रामे च जयप्रदा ।- Mbh.विराट.6.16
 7. दुर्गात् तारयसे दुर्गे तत् त्वं दुर्गा स्मृता जनैः । - Mbh.विराट.6.20
 8. उपगम्यतु राजानमिदं वचनमब्रवीत् ।
शृणु राजन् महाबाहो मदीयं वचनं प्रभो ॥ ⇨

It seems that Goddess Durga might have given boon for victory in war to Yudhiṣṭhira because he was the follower of Dharma. If Duryodhana would have prayed the same Goddess for victory, he would not have been able to acquire the boon for victory, as Goddess Durgā was the destroyer of Rakshasas. In the Mahābhārata, Sri Kṛṣṇa insisted Arjuna to pray Durgā for victory in war.⁹ He prayed Durgā as Kumāri, Kāli, Kāpālī, Kapilā, Kṛṣṇapingalā, Bhadrakālī and Mahākālī. She shows anger on her enemies, because of which she is called by name Chaṇḍī. She is called by name Tārīṇī as she destroys the sorrows of her worshippers.¹⁰ She is famous by name Vijayā

⇒ भविष्यत्यचिरादेव संग्रामे विजयस्तव ।

मम प्रसादान्निर्जित्य हत्वा कौरववाहिनीम् ॥

राज्यं निष्कण्टकं कृत्वा भोक्ष्यसे मोदिनीं पुनः ।

भ्रातृभिः सहितो राजन् प्रीतिं प्रापस्यसि पुष्कलाम् ॥ - Mbh.विराट.6.27-29

9. शुचिर्भूत्वा महाबाहो संग्रामाभिमुखे स्थितः ।

पराजयाय शत्रूणां दुर्गास्तोत्रमुदीरय ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.2

10. नमस्ते सिद्धसेनानि आर्ये मन्दरवासिनि ।

कुमारि कालि कापालि कपिले कृष्णपिङ्गले ॥

भद्रकालि नमस्तुभ्यं महाकालि नमोऽस्तु ते ।

चण्डि चण्डे नमस्तुभ्यं तारिणि वरवर्णिनि ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.4-5

and Jayā.¹¹ She holds weapons in her hands such as Trīūsula and sword etc. As she took birth in the family of Naṇḍagopa, she is the sister of Sri Kṛṣṇa.¹² She is described as the killer of Mahiśāsura. She is called Kauśiki as she took birth in Kauśika gotra. She loves the war, because she is the destroyer of evils.¹³ She is called by name Umā, Śākambhari, Sveta, Kṛṣṇā, Kaitabhanāśini, Hiranyākṣi, Virūpākṣi and Sudhumrākṣi.¹⁴ She is also called as Sāvitri, Swāhā, Swadhā, Kalā, Kāṣṭhā, Sarasvati, Vedamātā and Vedānta.¹⁵ She resides in forests, in the houses of her worshippers and in pātāla. She always defeats the rāksasas in the war.¹⁶ She enlightens sun and

11. कात्यायनि महाभागे करालि विजये जये ।
शिखिपिच्छध्वजधरे नानाभरणभूषिते ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.6
12. अट्टशूलप्रहरणे खड्गखेटकधारिणि ।
गोपेन्द्रस्यानुजे ज्येष्ठे नन्दगोपकुलोद्भवे ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.7
13. महिषासृक्प्रिये नित्यं कौशिकि पतिवासिनि ।
अट्टहासे कोकमुखे नमस्तेऽस्तु रणप्रिये ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.8
14. उमे शाकम्भरि श्वेते कृष्णे कैटभनाशिनी ।
हिरण्याक्षि विरुपाक्षि सुधूम्राक्षि नमोऽस्तुते ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.9
15. स्वाहाकारः स्वधा चैव कला काष्ठा सरस्वती ।
सावित्रि वेदमाता च तथा वेदान्त उच्यते ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.12
16. कान्तारभयदुर्गेषु भक्तानां चालयेषु च ।
नित्यं वससि पाताले युद्धे जयसि दानवान् ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.14

moon.¹⁷ Like this Arjuna prayed Durga and Goddess Durga appeared before him and granted him boons for victory in war.¹⁸

Navarātripuja :

Navarātripuja (nine nights' worship) is done to Goddess Durgā. Though this is observed all over India, it is more prominent in North India than anywhere else.¹⁹

As this festival is celebrated for nine nights, it is known as Navarātri and it continues upto Daśami, (the tenth night), it is called Dasara. This tenth night or Daśami is called Vijayadaśami, (victorious tenth) which is a festival of Indians. The Hindus believe that the Vijayadaśami (victorious tenth) was the day on which Devi Durgā killed Mahiśāsura and got

17. तुष्टिः पुष्टिर्धृतिर्दीप्तिश्चन्द्रादित्यविवर्धिनी ।

भूतिर्भूतिमतां सख्ये वीक्ष्यसे सिद्धचारणैः ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.16

18. ततः पार्थस्य विज्ञाय भक्तिं मानववत्सला ।

अन्तरिक्षगतोवाच गोविन्दस्याग्रतः स्थिता ॥

स्वल्पेनैव तु कालेन शत्रूञ्जेष्यसि पाण्डव ।

नरस्त्वमसि दुर्घर्ष नारायणसहायवान् ॥

अजेयस्त्वं रणेऽरीणामपि वज्रभृतः स्वयम् ।

इत्येवमुक्त्वा वरदा क्षणेनान्तरधीयत ॥ - Mbh.भीष्म.23.17-19

19. Cf. Vettem Maṇi, Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1975, P.No.536

victory. Sarasvati is considered as an transfiguration of Durgā. As people bacame less superstitious, they began to consider the story of killing Mahiśāsura as a metaphorical saying, to mean the killing of ignorance. So, the day of victory of Devi Durgā (same as Sarasvati) is considered to be the auspicious moment for the beginning of learning. On this day, even today, the warrior places his weapons, the man of literature his books and pen, the musician his musical instruments, at the feet of Devi and with devotion and worship receives them back from Devi on the Vijayadaśami day at an auspicious moment. This is a festival celebrated everywhere in India under the sponsorship of the royal family as a state festival. But this festival is celebrated on a grand scale in Mysore as it is believed that Mahiśāsura had lived in Mysore.²⁰

Umā and Pārvati :

Shankara's consort was the greatest among Goddesses and the best among devoted wives. When Shankara was not invited to Dakṣa's sacrifice, she wanted to do penance. When Shankara spoke of his greatness, she taunted to exite him saying that ignorant persons boasted like this before women.²¹ So, to

20. Ibid. Page No.853

21. सुप्राकृतोऽपि पुरुषः सर्वः स्त्रीजनसंसदि ।

स्तौति गर्वायते चापि स्वमात्मानं न संशयः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.284.27

prove his capacity, Shankara created Virabhadra to destroy Dakṣa's sacrifice.²² Pārvati created a woman Bhādrakālī to destroy Dakṣa's sacrifice.²³ Praised and prayed by Dakṣa, Shankara attended Dakṣa's sacrifice with Umā and bestowed boons on him.²⁴

In the Mahābhārata, Umā is pictured as a jewel amongst women,²⁵ and the couple (Umā and Sankara) are considered as an ideal couple, from whom the world is created.

पुलिङ्गं सर्वमीशानं स्त्रीलिङ्गं विद्धि चाप्युमाम् ।
द्वाभ्यां तनुभ्यां व्याप्तं हि चराचरमिदं जगत् ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.14.23

When Kṛṣṇa prayed Śiva, Umā appeared before him and told that Śiva had blessed him with a son by name Sāmba.²⁶ She too gave him boons that Kṛṣṇa would have 16000 wives.

22. सोऽसृजद् भगवान् वक्त्राद् भूतं घोरं प्रहर्षणम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.284.29

23. भद्रकालीति विख्याता देव्याः कोपाद् विनिः स्मृता ।- Mbh.शान्ति.284.54

24. तथास्त्वित्याह भगवान् भगनेत्रहरो हरः ।

धर्माध्यक्षो विरुपाक्षस्त्र्यक्षो देवः प्रजापतिः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.284.65

25. देव्याः कारणरूपभावजनिताः सर्वा भगाङ्गाः स्त्रियो ।- Mbh.अनुशासन.14.234

26. उवाचोमा प्रणिहिता शर्वाणी तपसां निधिः ।

दत्तो भगवता पुत्रः साम्बो नाम तवानघ ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.15.4

The next was a beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa and then was the love of his relatives. Another boon was that Kṛṣṇa would have the prosperity to be able to give food for seven thousand travellers daily.²⁷

Pārvati shines in the court of Brahmā.²⁸

पुरंदरश्च देवेन्द्रो वरुणो धनदो यमः ।

महादेवः सहस्रोऽत्र सदा गच्छति सर्वशः ॥

- Mbh.सभा.11.51

Śiva and Pārvati were living in the Himalayās after their marriage. Devas informed Śiva that he should not beget son by the womb of Pārvati as the son born to them would be the most powerful in the whole universe. If Śiva produced son, the world can not bear it, and so they requested Śiva to withdraw

27. भार्यामहस्राणि च षोडशैव

तासु प्रियत्वं च तथाक्षयं च ॥

प्रीतिं चाग्रां बान्धवानां सकाशाद्

ददामि तेऽहं वपुषः काम्यतां च ।

भोक्ष्यन्ति वै सप्ततिं वै शतानि

गृहे तुभ्यमतिथीनां च नित्यम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.15.7-8

28. पुरंदरश्च देवेन्द्रो वरुणो धनदो यमः ।

महादेवः सहस्रोऽत्र सदा गच्छति सर्वशः ॥ - Mbh.सभा.11.51

from the act of producing a child.²⁹

Śiva agreed to it. But Pārvati did not like it and she cursed the devas that they would never have sons of their own wives.³⁰

Pārvati told the names of pativrata women to Śiva.³¹

29. तदपत्यं हि युवयोर्देवानभिभवेद ध्रुवम् ।

न हि ते पृथिवी देवी न च धौर्न दिवं विभो ॥

नेदं धारयितुं शक्ताः समस्ता इति मे मतिः ।

तेजःप्रभावनिर्दग्धं तस्मात् सर्वमिदं जगत् ॥

तस्मात् प्रसादं भगवान् कर्तुमर्हसि नः प्रभो ।

न देव्यां सम्भवेत् पुत्रो भवतः सुरसत्तम ।

धैर्यदेव निगृह्णीष्व तेजो ज्वलितमुत्तमम् ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.84.68-70

30. रुद्राणीति ततः क्रुद्धा प्रजोच्छेदे तदा कृते ।

देवानथाब्रवीत् तत्र स्त्रीभावात् पुरुषं वचः ॥

यस्मादपत्यकामो वै भर्ता मे विनिवर्तितः ।

तस्मात् सर्वे सुरा यूयमनपत्या भविष्यथ ॥

प्रजोच्छेदो मम कृतो यस्माद् युष्यभिरद्य वै ।

तस्मात् प्रजा वः स्वगमाः सर्वेषां न भविष्यति ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.84.73-75

31. सावित्री ब्रह्मणः साध्वी कौशिकस्य शची सती ।

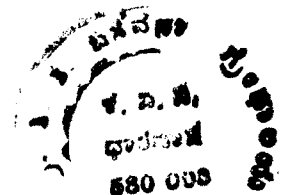
मार्कण्डेयस्य धूमोर्णा ऋद्धिवैश्रवणस्य च ॥

वरुणस्य तथा गौरी सूर्यस्य च सुवर्चला ।

रोहिणी शशिनः साध्वी स्वाहा चैव विभावसोः ॥

अदितिः कश्यपस्याथ सर्वास्थाः पतिदेवताः ।

पृष्ठाश्रोपासिताश्चैव तास्त्वया देवि नित्यशः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.146.4-6



She taught Gaṅgā the duties of women. According to Pārvati, the first and foremost duty of a woman is to treat her husband as God. She should always follow her husband in the path of Dharma. She should be well-versed in maintaining house-hold activities. She should always server her husband, even if her husband is poor or suffering from some diseases. She should always serve not only her husband but her parents-in-law also.³²

32. श्रुत्वा दम्पत्यधर्मं वै सहधर्मं कृतं शुभम् ।

या भवेद् धर्मपरमा नारी भर्तृसमव्रता ॥

देववत् सततं साध्वी भर्तारमनुपश्यति ।

दम्पत्योरेष वै धर्मः सहधर्मकृतः शुभः ॥

शुश्रूषां परिचारं च देवतुल्यं प्रकुर्वति ।

वश्या भावेन सुमनाः भर्तुः सा सहधर्मिणी ॥

पुरुषाण्यपि चोक्ता या दृष्टा दुष्टेन चक्षुषा ।

सुप्रसन्नमुखी भर्तुर्या नारी सा पतिव्रता ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.146.39-42

कुल्योत्थानरतिर्नित्यं गृहशुश्रूषणे रता ।

सुसम्मृष्टक्षया चैव गोशकृत्कृतलेपना ॥

अग्निकार्यपरा नित्यं सदा पुष्पबलिप्रदा ।

देवातिथिभृत्यानां निर्वाप्य पतिना सह ॥

शाषात्रमुपभुञ्जाना यथान्यायं यथाविधि ।

तुष्टपुष्टजना नित्यं नारी धर्मेण युज्यते ॥

श्वश्रूश्वशुरयोः पादौ जोषयन्ती गुणान्विता ।

मातापितृदरा नित्यं या नारी सा तपोधना ॥ ⇨

Lakṣmī :

In the Mahābhārata Goddess Lakṣmī is described as the Goddess of prosperity and happiness. She came out of the milky ocean during the churning of the seas. The celestial horse coming out from there after her was called her son. She is called the sister of Dhātā and Vidhātā - the sons of Brahma.

द्वौ पुत्रौ ब्रह्मणस्त्वन्यौ ययोस्तिष्ठति लक्षणम् ।
लोके धाता विधाता च यो स्थितौ मनुना सह ॥
तयोरेव स्वसा देवी लक्ष्मी पद्ममृहा शुभा ।
तस्यास्तु मानसाः पुत्राश्चतुर्णा व्योमचारिणः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.66.50-51

⇒ ब्राह्मणान् दुर्बलानाथान् दीनान्धकृपणांस्तथा ।
बिभर्त्यन्नेन या नारी सा पतिव्रतभागिनी ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.146.48-52
पतिर्हि देवो नारीणां पतिर्बन्धुः पतिर्गतिः ।
पत्या समा गतिर्नास्ति दैवतं वा यथा पतिः ॥
पतिप्रसादः स्वर्गो वा तुल्यो नार्या न वा भवेत् ।
अहं स्वर्गं न हीच्छेयं त्वय्यप्रीते महेश्वरे ॥
यद्यकार्यमधर्मं वा यदि वा प्राणनाशनम् ।
पतिब्रूयाद् दरिद्रो वा व्याधितो वा कथंचन ॥
आपन्नो रिपुसंस्थो वा ब्रह्मशापार्दितोऽपि वा ।
आपद्धर्माननुप्रेक्ष्य तत्कार्यमविशङ्कया ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.146.55-58

She is the daughter of Dakṣaprajāpati and was married to Dharmadeva³³ when Bali, the king of Demons (Daityas) gave up good deeds, Lakṣmī left him and went to Indra.³⁴ Indra divided her into four parts³⁵ to reside in earth,³⁶ flowing waters,³⁷ fire

यस्मिन् वेदाश्च यज्ञाश्च यस्मिन् देवाः प्रतिष्ठिताः ।
तृतीयं पादमग्निस्ते सुधृतं धारयिष्यति ॥
एष मे निहितः पादो योऽयमग्नौ प्रतिष्ठितः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.225.25-26

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33. नामतो धर्मपत्न्यस्ताः कीर्त्यमाना निबोध मे ।
कीर्तिर्लक्ष्मीर्धृतिर्मेधा पुष्टिः श्रद्धा क्रिया तथा ॥
बुद्धिर्लज्जा मतिश्चैव पत्न्यो धर्मस्य ता दश ।
द्वाराण्येतानि धर्मस्य विहितानि स्वयम्भुवा ॥ - Mbh.आदि.66.14-15
34. सत्ये स्थितास्मि दाने च व्रते तपसि चैव हि ।
पराक्रमे च धर्मे च पराचीनस्ततो बलिः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.225.12
35. स्थास्यामि नित्यं देवेन्द्र यथा त्वयि निबोध तत् ।
विधिना वेददृष्टेन चतुर्धा विभजस्व माम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.225.19
36. भूमिरेव मनुष्येषु धारिणी भूतभाविनी ।
सा ते पादं तितिक्षेत समर्था हीति मे मतिः ॥
एष मे निहितः पादो योऽयं भूमौ प्रतिष्ठितः । - Mbh.शान्ति.225.21-22
37. आप एव मनुष्येषु द्रवन्त्यः परिचारिणीः ।
तारते पादं तितिक्षन्तामलपापस्तितिक्षितुम् ॥
एष मे निहितः पादो योऽयमत्सु प्रतिष्ठितः । - Mbh.शान्ति.225.23-24

and righteous persons.³⁸

In the list of ideal devoted wives, she is said to be the wife of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. In her talk with Rukmiṇi, she is declared as the wife of the master of the three worlds, seated on the lap of Nārāyaṇa with lustrous eyes and lotus like complexion.³⁹ She told Rukmiṇi that she resides in the wise, truthful and devoted persons.⁴⁰ She herself declared that she did not live bodily in anybody but only as sentiment or emotion bringing success in the three Puruṣārthas, she resided in all auspicious things, stayed with housewives of good conduct.

नाहं शरीरेण वसामि देवि
नैवं मया शक्यमिहाभिधातुम् ।
भावेन यस्मिन् निवसामि पुंसि
स वर्धते धर्मयशोऽर्थकामैः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.11.21

38. ये वै सन्तो मनुष्येषु ब्रह्मण्याः सत्यवादिनः ।

ते ते पादं तितिक्षन्तामलं सन्तास्तितिक्षितुम् ॥

एष मे निहितः पादो योऽयं सत्सु प्रतिष्ठितः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.225.27-28

39. नारायणस्याङ्गतां ज्वलन्तीं

दृष्ट्वा श्रियं पद्मसमानवर्णाम् । - Mbh.अनुशासन.11.3

40. वसामि नित्यं सुभगे प्रलभे दक्षे नरे कर्मणि वर्तमाने ।

अक्रोधने देवपरे कृतज्ञे जितेन्द्रिये नित्यमुदीर्णसत्त्वे ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.11.6

स्वधर्मशीलेषु च धर्मवित्सु
 वृद्धोपसेवानिरते च दान्ते ।
 कृतात्मनि क्षान्तिपरे समर्थे
 क्षान्तासु दान्तासु तथाबलासु ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.11.10

सत्यस्वभावार्जवसंयुतासु
 वसामि देवद्विजपूजिकासु ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.11.10 1/2

So, a devout wife is called Lakṣmī of the house. She left the wives of bad conduct.⁴¹ She took birth as Rukmiṇi to make Kṛṣṇa happy.⁴²

The cows didnot allow her to reside in them due to her fickleness.⁴³ But on her request, allowed her to stay in their

41. प्रकीर्णभाण्डामनवेक्ष्य कारिणीं

सदा च भर्तुः प्रतिकूलवादिनीम् ॥

परस्य वेश्माभिरतामलज्जामेवंविधां तां परिवर्जयामि ।

पापमचोक्षमवलेहिनीं च व्यपेतधैर्या कलहप्रियां च ॥

निद्राभिभूतां सततं शयानामेवंविधां तां परिवर्जयामि ।

सत्यासु नित्यं प्रियदर्शनासु सौभाग्ययुक्तासु गुणान्वितासु ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.11.11-13

42. श्रियस्तु भागः संजज्ञे रत्यर्थे पृथिवीतले ।

भीष्मकस्य कुले साध्वी रुक्मिणी नाम नामतः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.67.156

43. नावमन्यामहे देवि न त्वां परिभवामहे ।

आध्रुवा चलचित्तासि ततस्त्वां वर्जयामह ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.82.17

urine and dung.⁴⁴

On the whole Lakṣmī seems to be an incarnation of various good qualities, and emotions. However, Draupadi was said to be Lakṣmī in her previous life and the Pāṇdavas were Indras.

तेषां कामं भगवानुग्रधन्वा
प्रदादिष्टं संनिसर्गाद् यथोक्तम् ।
तां चाप्येषां योषितं लोककान्तां
श्रियं भार्या व्यदधान्मानुषेषु ॥

- Mbh.आदि.196.30

Aditi :

Aditi is one among 13 daughters of Dakṣa.⁴⁵ Devas are sons born to Kāśyapa by Aditi and hence they are known as Āditeyas also.⁴⁶ Kāśyapa had 21 wives who were Aditi, Diti,

44. अवश्यं मानना कार्या तवास्माभिर्यशस्विनी ।

शकुन्मूत्रे निवस त्वं पुण्यमेतद्धि नः शुभे ॥

दिष्ट्या प्रसादो युष्माभिः कृतो मेऽनुग्रहात्मकः ।

एवं भवतु भद्रं वः पूजितास्मि सुखप्रदाः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.82.24-25

45. अदितिर्दितिर्दनुः काला दनायुः सिंहिका तथा ।

क्रोधा प्राधा च विश्वा च विनता कपिला मुनिः ॥

कद्रूश्च मनुजव्याघ्र दक्षकन्यैव भारत । - Mbh.आदि.65.12-13

46. आदित्यां द्वादशादित्याः सम्भूता भुवनेश्वराः । - Mbh.आदि.65.14

Danu, Ariṣṭā, Surasā, Khaśā, Surabhi, Vinatā, Tamarā, Krodhavaśā, Irā, Kadru, Muni, Pulomā, Kālakā, Natā, Danāyus, Simhikā, Pradhā, Viśvā, and Kapila. Of these the 13 wives Aditi, Diti, Kālakā, Danāyus, Danu, Simhikā, Krodhā, Pradhā, Viśvā, Vinatā, Kapilā, Muni and Kadrū were the daughters of Dakṣa.⁴⁷ Kaśyapa married all the 13 daughters of Dakṣa including Aditi and all living beings owe their origin to them. 33 sons were born to Aditi, 12 of them are called Dvādaśādityas, viz. Dhātā, Aryamā, Mitra, Sakra, Varuṇa, Amśa, Bhaga, Vivasvān, Pūṣā, Savitā, Tvaṣṭā, and Viṣṇu.⁴⁸

The Mahābhārata refers to Mahāviṣṇu as the son of Aditi, the wife of Kaśyapa. Viṣṇu entered the womb of Aditi as Vāmana (Dwarf). Aditi kept Mahāvishṇu in her womb for 1000 years.⁴⁹

47. Cf. Vettem Maṇi, Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1975, Page No.396

48. धाता मित्रोऽर्यमा शक्रोः वरुणस्त्वंश एव च ।
भगो विवस्वान् पूषा च सविता दशमस्तथा ॥
एकादशस्तथा त्वष्टा द्वादशो विष्णुरच्यते ।
जधन्यजस्तु सर्वेषामादित्यानां गुणाधिकः ॥ - Mbh.आदि.65.15-16

49. कश्यपस्यात्मजः श्रीमानदित्या गर्भधारितः ।
पूर्णे वर्षसहस्रे तु प्रसूता गर्भमुत्तमम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.272.62
त्रील्लोकाननुशासत्सु विष्णौ गर्भत्वमागते ।
अदित्यास्तप्यमानायास्तपो घोरं सुदुश्चरम् ॥ ⇨

Narakāśura, who turned to be a curse and menace to the three worlds consequent on the boon he got from Viṣṇu attacked Devaloka, and carried off Indra's royal umbrella and Aditi's ear-rings. Mahāviṣṇu incarnated himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa killed Narakāśura in the battle and got back the ear-rings.⁵⁰

Once, desirous of children, Aditi cooked food sitting herself in the entrails of Mount Myanaka.⁵¹ Dharmaputra, in the course of singing the glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa after the great war, refers to Viṣṇu having taken birth seven times in the womb of Aditi.⁵²

⇒ पुत्रार्थममरश्रेष्ठ पादेनैकेन नित्यदा ।

तां तु दृष्ट्वा महादेवीं तप्यमानां महत्तपः ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.83.26-27

50. प्राग्ज्योतिषं नाम बभूव दुर्गं

पुरं घोरमसुराणामसह्यम् ।

महाबलो नरकस्तत्र भौमो

जहारादित्या मणिकुण्डले शुभे ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.48.80

आहृत्य कृष्णो मणिकुण्डले ते

हत्वा च भौमं नरकं मुरं च ।

श्रिया वृतो यशसा चैव विद्वान्

प्रत्याजगामाप्रतिमप्रभावः ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.48.85

51. एतद् विनशनं कुक्षौ मैनाकस्य नरर्षभ ।

अदितिर्यत्र पुत्रार्थं तदन्नमपचत् पुरा ॥ - Mbh.वन.135.3

52. अदित्याः सप्तधा त्वं तु पुराणो गर्भतां गतः ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.43.6

Swāhā :

According to Devi Bhāgavata, when Brahmā created this world. Gods were in misery as they were not getting sufficient food. With the request of Gods, Brahmā said that the havis offered by Brahmins will be their food. Then Brahmā mediated on the Mūla-Prakṛti. She appeared before him and asked him what boon he required. Then Brahmā said that, the fire is not powerful enough to digest the havis offered by Brahmins in the fire so as to convert them as food for the Gods. He further told that the fire would become powerful to digest the havis only if Goddess Mulaprakṛti's esteemed self would reside in fire as the power of digestion. Only the havis offered, with the mantra (spell) ending with her glorious self, could be digested by fire and taken to the Gods as food. But that Goddess said that her desire was to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa as her husband. She did penance to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who appeared and said that she will take birth as the daughter of king Nagnajit in Varāha Kalpa (a world-age) and then she will become his wife. He further told that, at the moment, she would be the wife of Agni under the name Swāhā, and become the power of digestion, and part of the mantra (spell). He also told that she and Agni will be worshipped together by all. From that day onwards, Swāhādevi became the wife of fire.⁵³

53. Cf. Vettem Maṇi, Purāṇic Encyclopaedia, Motilal Banarasi Dass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1975, Page No.777

In the Mahābhārata, Swāhā is described as the daughter of Prajāpati Dakṣa. She was in love with Agni (fire God)

स्वाहा तं दक्षदुहिता प्रथमं कामयत् तदा।
सा तस्य छिद्रमन्वैच्छच्चिरात्प्रभृति भाविनि ॥

- Mbh.वन.224.39

She went to Agni in the form of Angirā wife of Śivā.⁵⁴ Agni accepted Swāhā in the form of Śivā.⁵⁵ She became the mother of Skanda, by whose grace she got constant companionship of Agni. In all offerings to Agni, Swāhā's name is uttered.⁵⁶

Indrāṇi :

Indrāṇi descended from Viṣṇu. Pulomā was an asura born to Kaśyapa by his wife Danu. Indra married Śaci, the daughter

54. शिवा भार्या त्वङ्गिरसः शीलरूपगुणान्विता ।

तस्याः सा प्रथमं रूपं कृत्वा देवी जनाधिप ॥ - Mbh.वन.225.1

55. ततोऽग्निरूपयेमे तां शिवां प्रतिमुदायुतः ।

प्रीत्या देवी समायुक्ता शुक्रं जग्राह पाणिना ॥ - Mbh.वन.225.7

56. हव्यं काव्यं च यत्किञ्चिद् द्विजानां मन्त्रसंस्तुतम् ।

होष्यन्त्यग्नौ सदा देवि स्वाहेत्युक्त्वा समुद्धृतम् ॥

अद्यप्रभृति दास्यन्ति सुवृत्ताः सत्पथे स्थिताः ।

एवमग्निस्त्वया सार्धं सदा वत्स्यति शोभने ॥ - Mbh.वन.231.5-6

of Pulomā and hence Śaci is called Indrāṇi also. She is called Pulomī also as she was the daughter of Pulomā. In the Mahābhārata, Goddess Indrāṇi is stated to be a devoted wife of Indra. She had to face calamities as human women experienced. Indra left heaven by the fear of Brahmahatya as he killed Vṛtrāsura, and hid himself in the petal of a lotus flower.⁵⁷ Evil forces began to appear. Indrā, who had hidden in the lotus stalk in the shape of water-snake, was not at all visible as the petals had closed over him. It was at this critical moment, that king Nahuṣa had completed hundred horse-sacrifices and became eligible for the throne of Devendra. The enemies attacked heaven as it had no king.

Then due to the absence of the king of heaven Indra, all Gods became afraid and were searching for a new king to protect themselves.⁵⁸ They decided that Nahuṣa would be their

57. प्रतिष्ठन्नोऽवसन्नाप्सु चेष्टमान इवोरगः ।

ततः प्रणष्टे देवेन्द्र ब्रह्महत्याभयार्दिते ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.10.46

58. अराजकं जगत् सर्वमभिभूतमुपद्रवः ।

ततो भीताऽभवन् देवाः को नो राजा भवेदिति ॥

देवि देवर्षयश्चापि देवराजविनाकृताः ।

न स्म कश्चन देवानां राज्ये वै कुरुते मतिम् ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.10.49-50

king due to his dharmic inheritance.⁵⁹ He gained mastery over all the things which were mastered by Indra, like Apsaras, Vishwāvasu, Nārada and Gandharva.⁶⁰

Once, he saw Śachi, wife of Indra, (Indrāṇi) and wanted to gain mastery over her also.⁶¹ Knowing this, she went to Brahma and asked him to protect her from Nahusha. Gods prayed Nahusha not to force Sachi to become his wife as she was the wife of the other Indra.⁶² But Nahusha did not agree

59. ऋषयोऽथान्नुवन् सर्वे देवाश्च त्रिदिवेश्वराः ।

अयं वै नहुषः श्रीमान् देवराज्येऽभिषिच्यताम् ॥

तेजस्वी च यशस्वी च धार्मिकश्चैव नित्यदा ।

ते गत्वा त्वन्नुवन् सर्वे राजा नो भव पार्थिव ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग. 11.1-2

60. विश्वावसुर्नारदश्च गन्धवाप्सरसां गणाः ।

ऋतवः षट् च देवेन्द्रं मूर्तिमन्त उपस्थिताः ॥

मारुतः सुरभिर्भवति मनोज्ञः सुखशीतलः ।

एवं च क्रीडतस्तस्य नहुषस्य दुरात्मनः ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग. 11.15-16

61. सम्प्राप्ता दर्शनं देवी शक्रस्य महिषी प्रिया ।

स तां संदृश्य दुष्टात्मा प्राह सर्वान् सभासदः ॥

इन्द्रश्च महिषी देवी कस्मान्मां नोपतिष्ठति ।

अहमिन्द्रोऽस्मि देवानां लोकानां च तथोश्वरः ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग. 11.17-18

62. परस्य पत्नी सा देवी प्रसीदस्व सुरेश्वर ॥

निवर्तय मनः प्राणात् परदाराभिमर्शनात् ।

देवराजोऽसि भद्रं ते प्रजा धर्मेण पालय ॥ - Mbh. उद्योग. 12.3-4

with this. Then she was forced by the Gods to go to Nahusha and accept him as her husband, as he was the present Indra.⁶³ She worshipped Nishā and Upashruti, as she was a devoted wife and righteous.

प्रयता च निशां देवीमुपातिष्ठत तत्र सा ।
पातिव्रतात्वात् सत्येन सोपश्रुतिमथाकरोत् ॥
यत्रास्ते देवराजोऽसौ तं देशं दर्शयस्व मे ।
इत्याहोपश्रुतिं देवीं सत्यं सत्येन दृश्यते ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.13.26-27

Upaśruti appeared before her and with her grace, she found Indra hiding in the lotus stalk.⁶⁴ Indrāṇi, (Shachi) was helped by the Goddess Upashruti, as Indrāṇi was a devoted wife following Pativrata Dharma.

उपश्रुतिरहं देवि तवान्तिकमुपागता ।
दर्शनं चैव सम्प्राप्ता तव सत्येन भाविनि ॥
पातिव्रता च युक्ता च यमेन नियमेन च ।
दर्शयिष्यामि ते शक्रं देवं वृत्रनिषूदनम् ॥

- Mbh.उद्योग.14.3-4

63. इन्द्राद् विशिष्टो नहुषो देवराजो महाद्युतिः ।

वृणोत्विमं वरारोहा भर्तृत्वे वरवर्णिनी ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.12.13

64. पद्मस्य भित्वा नालं च विवेश सहिता तया ।

विसतन्तुंप्रविष्टं च तत्रापश्यच्छतक्रतुम् ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.14.11

After consulting Indra, with his advise, she made Nahusha, make sages draw Indra's chariot⁶⁵ struck by his foot, the enraged sages destroyed Nahusha.⁶⁶

Thus, Indra regained his place again due to Indrāṇi's cleverness and help.

Vinatā and Kadrū :

Kaśyapa, son of Brahmā, married Viantā and Kadrū and being so much pleased by their services he gave them boons. Kadrū got the boon to have 1000 Naga (serpent) sons, and Vinatā to have two sons more powerful and vital then the sons of Kadrū.

ते भार्ये कश्यपस्यास्तां कद्रूच विनता च ह ।
 प्रादात् ताभ्यां परं प्रीतः प्रजापतिसमः पतिः ॥
 कश्यपो धर्मपत्नीभ्यां मुदा परमया युतः ।
 वरातिसर्गं श्रुत्वैवं कश्यपादुत्तमं च ते ॥
 हर्षादप्रतिमां प्रीतिं प्रापतुः स्म परस्त्रियौ ।
 वव्रे कद्रूः सुतान् नागान् सहस्रं तुल्यवर्चसः ॥

65. ऋषियानेन दिव्येन मामुपैहि जगत्पते ।

एवं तव वशे प्रीता भविष्यामीति तं वद ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.15.4

66. वाहान् कृत्वा वाहयसि तेन स्वर्गाद्धतप्रभः ।

ध्वंस पाप परिभ्रष्टः क्षीणपुण्यो महीतले ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.17.16

द्वौ पुत्रौ विनता वव्रे कद्रूपुत्राधिकौ बले ।
तेजसा वपुषा चैव विक्रमेणाधिकौ च तौ ॥

- Mbh.आदि.16.6-9

After this, Kaśyapa went into forest again for tapas. After a period Kadrū gave birth to 1000 eggs and Vinatā to two. Both the mothers kept their eggs in pots so that they were in the right temperature. After 500 years the pot broke up and Kadrū had 1000 sons. Vinatā felt pained at this and opened one of her pots. A child only half-developed emerged from the egg and he was Aruṇa.

कालेन महता कद्रूण्डानां दशतीर्दश ॥
जानयामास विपेन्द्र द्वे चाण्डे विनता तदा ।
तयोरण्डानि निदधुः प्रहृष्टाः परिचारिकाः ॥
सोपस्वेदेषु भाण्डेषु पञ्चवर्षशतानि च ।
ततः पञ्चशते काले कद्रूपुत्रा विनिः सृताः ॥
अण्डाभ्यां विनतायास्तु मिथुनं न व्यदृश्यत ।
ततः पुत्रार्थिनी देवी ब्रीडिता च तवस्विनी ॥
अण्डं बिभेद विनता तत्र पुत्रमपश्यत ।
पूर्वार्धकायसम्पन्न मितरेणाप्रकाशता ॥

- Mbh.16.13-17

Aruna got angry at the haste of his mother and cursed his mother to live as a slave of Kadrū for 500 years. He also asked her to wait for 500 years so that the birth of another physically deficient son like himself might be avoided.

स पुत्रः क्रोधसंरब्धः शशापैनामिति श्रुतिः ।
 योऽहमेवं कृतो मातस्त्वया लोभपरीतया ॥
 शरीरेणासमग्रेण तस्माद् दासी भविष्यसि ।
 पञ्चवर्षशतान्यस्या यया विस्पर्धसे सह ॥
 एष च त्वां सुतो मातर्दासीत्वान्मोचयिष्यति ।
 यद्येन मपि मातस्त्वं मामिवाण्डविभेदनात् ।
 न करिष्यस्यनङ्गं वा व्यङ्गं वापि तपस्विनम् ॥
 प्रतिपालयितव्यस्ते जन्मकालोऽस्य धीरया ॥
 विशिष्टं बलमीप्सन्त्या पञ्चवर्षशतात् परः ।
 एवं शप्त्वा ततः पुत्रो विनतामन्तरिक्षगः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.16.18-22

After pronouncing this curse, Aruṇa rose to the sky, and sat on the chariot of sun. So, Aruṇa first appears in the east every morning.

अरुणो दृश्यते ब्रह्मन् प्रभातसमये सदा ।
 आदित्यरथमध्यास्ते सारथ्य समकल्पयत् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.16.23

The sun and the moon betrayed to the Devas Rāhu, who waited at the entrance of Devaloka to snatch off the Nectar (Amṛtam), got at the churning of the sea of milk (kṣirābhi). Rāhu often swallows the sun and the moon. That phenomenon is called the eclipse (of the sun or moon, Surya-grahaṇa and Chandra-grahaṇa) -

चन्द्रार्काभ्यां यदा राहुराख्यातो ह्यमृतं पिबत् ॥
 वैरानुबन्धं कृतवांश्चन्द्रादित्यौ तवानघ ।
 वध्यमाने ग्रहेणाथ आदित्ये मन्युराविशत् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.24.6-7

Emerged by these frequent attacks of Rāhu, the Sun-God began once to burn like anything, as to destroy all living forms. Devas were frightened by this and took refuge in Brahmā. Brahmā called Aruṇa and asked him to stand as charioteer in front of the Sun-God every day so that the Sun's intensity might be reduced. From that day onwards, Aruṇa has been functioning as the charioteer of the Sun.

एष लोकविनाशाय रविरुद्यन्तुमुद्यतः ।
 दृश्यन्नेव हि लोकान् स भस्मराशीकरिष्यति ॥
 तस्य प्रतिविधानं च विहितं पूर्वमेव हि ।
 कश्यपस्य सुतो धीमानरुणेत्यभिविश्रुतः ॥
 महाकायो महातेजाः स स्थास्यति पुरो रवेः ।
 करिष्यति च सारथ्यं तेजश्चास्य हरिष्यति ॥
 लोकानां स्वस्ति चैवं स्याद् ऋषीणां च दिवौकसाम् ।
 ततः पितामहाज्ञातः सर्वे चक्रे तदारुणः ॥

- Mbh.आदि.24.18

Sukanyā :

Sukanyā, was the daughter of Śaryāti. One day, Śaryāti with his wives and children came to the forest for a picnic. Sukanyā, came to the place where Cyavana sat doing penance.

There was an unusual radiance around the heap of earth. Out of curiosity, Sukanyā started striking down the earth. Then from inside, came Cyavana's voice advising her not to crumble down the earth, as she was doing the same. Sukanyā ignored the advice and searched for the source of the voice. She then saw two points of glow and taking a thorn gave two pricks at those points and left the place with her companions.⁶⁷

Those glow-points were the eyes of Cyavana. As a result of this, Cyavana felt insufferable pain when his eyes were thus pierced through. Soon, the country of Saryāti began to experience the bad effects of this evil-deed. People were disabled from passing either urine and faeces.⁶⁸

Sukanyā went to her father and confessed what she had done. ⁶⁹

67. तामावभाषे कल्याणीं सा चास्य न शृणोति वै ।

ततः सुकन्या वल्मीके दृष्ट्वा भार्गवचक्षुषौ ॥

कौतूहलात् कण्टकेन बुद्धिमोहबलात्कृता ।

किं नु खल्विदमित्युक्त्वा निर्बभेदास्य लोचने ॥ - Mbh.वन.122.12-13

68. अक्रुध्यत् स तया विद्धे नेत्रे परममन्युमान् ।

ततः शर्यातिसैन्यस्य शकृन्मूत्रे समावृणोत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.122.14

69. पितरं दुःखितं दृष्ट्वा सुकन्येयमथाब्रवीत् ।

मयाटन्त्येह वल्मीके दुष्टं सत्त्वमभिज्वलत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.122.20

Then Śaryāti apologised to Cyavana and requested him to pardon his daughter. He compelled Śaryāti to give his daughter in marriage to him.⁷⁰

The king Śaryāti was shocked to hear this for Cyavana was not only ugly but blind also. But Sukanyā agreed to be the wife of Cyavana. Sukanyā, after becoming the wife of Cyavana did all that she could make her husband comfortable and happy.⁷¹

One day, Sukanyā came across the Aśvinidevas. They requested her to select one of them as her husband. They advised her to forsake her old and blind husband. She wisely

70. अज्ञानाद् बालया यत् ते कृतं तत् क्षन्तुमर्हसि ।

ततोऽब्रवीन्महीपालं च्यवनो भार्गवस्तदा ॥

अपमानादहं विद्धो ह्यनया दर्पपूर्णया ।

रूपौदार्यसमायुक्तां लोभमोहबलात्कृताम् ॥

तामेव प्रतिगृह्णाहं राजन् दुहितरं तव ।

क्षंस्योमीति महीपालं सत्यमेतद् ब्रवीमि ते ॥ - Mbh.वन.122.23-25

71. प्रतिग्रह्य च तां कन्यां भगवान् प्रससाद ह ।

प्राप्तप्रसादो राजा वै ससैन्यः पुरमाव्रजत् ॥

सुकन्यापि पतिं लब्ध्वा तपस्विनमनिन्दिता ।

नित्यं पर्यचरत् प्रीत्या तपसा नियमेन च ॥

अग्नीनामतिथीनां च शुश्रूषुरनसूयिका ।

समाराधयत् क्षिप्रं च्यवनं सा शुभानना ॥ - Mbh.वन.122.27-29

convinced them the error of their request by logical argument. Aśvinikumaras then told that they were the physicians of the devas. They could give back eye-sight to her husband and made him as beautiful as one of them. By saying so, they appeared before her as three lovely young men identical in appearance, difficult to be distinguished from one another. When Sukanyā stood before the three and selected her real husband.⁷²

Arundhati :

Arundhati was the wife of sage Vasiṣṭha. In the Mahābhārata, it is told that her beauty suffered a set-back as she got suspicious about the character of Vasiṣṭha and misunderstood her chaste husband.⁷³

72. यत्र वाप्यभिकामासि तं वृणीष्व सुशोभने ।

सा समीक्ष्य तु तान् सर्वास्तुल्यरूपधरान् स्थितान् ॥

निश्चित्य मनसा बुद्ध्या देवी वव्रे स्वकं पतिम् ।

लब्ध्वा तु च्यवनो भार्या वयो रूपं च वाञ्छितम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.123.20-21

73. वैराग्निदीपनं चैव भृशमुद्वेगकारि च ।

सुव्रता चापि कल्याणि सर्वभूतेषु विश्रुता ॥

अरुन्धती महात्मानं वसिष्ठं पर्यसङ्कत ।

विशुद्धभावमत्यन्तं सदा प्रियहिते रतम् ॥

सप्तर्षिमध्यगं धीरमवमेने च तं मुनिम् ।

अपध्यानेन सा तेन धूमारुणसमप्रभा ।

लक्ष्यलक्ष्या नाभिरुपा निमित्तमिव पश्यति ॥ - Mbh.आदि.132.27-29

This incident is justified by the following sloka -

न स्त्रीणां विद्यते किञ्चिदमुत्र पुरुषान्तरात् ।
सापत्नकमृते लोके नान्यदर्थविनाशनम् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.132.26

Arundhati hold a place in Brahmā's assembly with other Devis like Pṛthvi, Surā and Śaci.⁷⁴

She holds a prominent place among all other chaste women in devotion to her husband. She had spiritual power because of her chastity and service to her husband.⁷⁵

She was offered an honourable seat by the seven great sages. The seven sages left their other six wives.⁷⁶

Arundhati was blessed by Śiva, because of her fidelity to serve the guest. This story is narrated in the Mahābhārata.

74. पृथ्वी गां गता देवी ह्रीः स्वाहा कीतिरेव च ।

सुरा देवी शची चैव तथा पुष्टिररुन्धती ॥ - Mbh.सभा.11.42

75. पत्नीसरूपतां कृत्वा कामयामास पावकम् ।

दिव्यरुपरुन्धत्याः कर्तुं न शंकितं तथा ॥

तस्यास्तपःप्रभावेण भर्तृशुश्रूषणेन च ।

षट्कृत्वस्तत् तु निक्षिप्तमग्ने रेतः कुरुतम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.225.14-15

76. अथ सप्तर्षयः श्रुत्वा जातं पुत्रं महौजसम् ।

तत्पुत्रं षट् तदा पत्नीर्विना देवीमरुन्धतीम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.226.8

Once, the seven great R̥ṣis were staying at the Himalayas. Munis suffered much without either roots or fruits to eat as it did not rain consecutively for twelve years. Arundhati started doing penance, and as a result, Siva appeared before her disguised as a brahmin. At that moment, she cooked food with some cheap roots and served the guest with it. As a result, it rained profulouly all over the area.⁷⁷

Then Siva appeared before her in his original form and from that day onwards, it became a sacred spot.

She lived with hunger and thirst for twelve years and cooked food with cheap roots and hence, made severe penance. Siva was pleased with this, and have her the boon that the place where Arundhati did penance came to be known as Badarapāchana. The man, who lives there for three nights and makes penance, that man gets the fruit of twelve year's fast.⁷⁸

77. इत्युक्त्वा सापचत् तानि ब्राह्मणप्रियकाम्यया ।

अधिश्रित्य समिद्धेनै बदराणि यशस्विनी ॥

दिव्या मनोरमाः पुण्याः कथाः शुश्राव सा तदा ।

अतीता सा त्वनावृष्टिर्घोरा द्वादशवार्षिकी ॥

अनश्नन्त्याः पचन्त्याश्च शृण्वन्त्याश्च कथाः शुभाः ।

दिनोपमः स तस्याथ कालोऽतीतः सुदारुणः ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.148.41-43

78. भगवान् यदि मे प्रीतस्तार्थं स्यादिदमद्भुतम् ॥

सिद्धदेवर्षिदयितं नाम्ना बदरपाचनम् । ⇨

She explained the secret principles of ethics to Devas.⁷⁹
Then all Devas became happy and Brahmā blessed Arundhati
that her penance will continue for a long period.⁸⁰

From Mahābhārata, it is known that Arundhati and Vasiṣṭha
did tapas at the sacred Sarasvati tīrtha and entered into
Samadhi.⁸¹

⇒ तथास्मिन् देवदेवेश त्रिरात्रमुषितः शुचिः ॥
पाटन्यादुपवासेन फलं द्वादशवार्षिकम् ।
एवमस्त्विति तां देवः प्रत्युवाच तपस्विनीम् ॥ - Mbh.शल्य.148.50-52

79. तपोवृद्धिर्मया प्राप्ता भवतां स्मरणेन वै ।
भवतां च प्रसादेन धर्मान् वक्ष्यामि शाश्वतान् ॥
सगुह्यान् सहरस्यांश्च ताञ्शृणुध्वमशेषतः ।
श्रद्धधाने प्रयेक्तव्या यस्य शुद्धं तथा मनः ॥
अश्रद्धमानो मानी च ब्रह्महा गुरुतल्पगः ।
असम्भाष्या हि चत्वारो नैषां धर्मः प्रकाशयेत् ॥
अहन्यहानि यो दद्यात् कपिलां द्वादशीः समाः ।
मासि मासि च सत्रेण यो यजेत सदा नरः ॥
गवां शतसहस्रं च यो दद्याज्ज्येष्ठपुष्करे ।
न तद्धर्मफलं तुल्यमतिथिर्यस्य तुष्यति - Mbh.अनुशासन.130.3-7

80. अहो धर्मो महाभागे सरहस्य उदाहृतः ।
वरं ददामि ते धन्ये तपस्ते वर्धतां सदा ॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.130.13

81. एष उज्जानको नाम पावकिर्यत्र शान्तवान् ।
अरुन्धतीसहायश्च वसिष्ठो भगवानृषिः ॥ - Mbh.वन.130.17

Sāvitri :

She was the daughter of Sun-God. She shines in the palace of Brahma.⁸² She is the sovereign deity of the mantra Gāyatri. She was worshipped by king Ashwapati for eighteen years. She rose up from the sacrificial fire of king Ashwapati⁸³ and gave him the boon of a daughter⁸⁴ who became famous by the same name, Sāvitri.⁸⁵ This princess was the wife of Satyavan.

Once, Brāhmin Satya rejected Sāvitri's request to kill a deer in the sacrifice. As a result of this, she entered the sacrificial fire and went away to Rasātala or lower worlds.⁸⁶

82. सावित्री दुर्गतरणी वाणी स्पतविधा तथा ।
मेधा धृतिः श्रुतिश्चैव प्रज्ञा बुद्धिर्यशः क्षमा ॥ - Mbh.सभा.11.34

83. एतेन नियमेनासीद् वर्षाण्यष्टादशैव तु ।
पूर्णे त्वष्टादशे वर्षे सावित्री तुष्टिमभ्यगात् ॥
रूपिणी तु तदा राजन् दर्शयामास तं नृपम् ।
अग्निहोत्रात् समुत्थाय हर्षेण महतान्विता ।
उवाच चैनं वरदा वचनं पार्थिवं तदा ॥ - Mbh.वन.10-11

84. प्रसादाच्चैव तस्मात् ते स्वयम्भुविहिताद् भुवि ।
कन्या तेजस्विनी सौम्य क्षिप्रमेव भविष्यति ॥ - Mbh.वन.293.17

85. सावित्र्या प्रीतया दत्ता सावित्र्या हुतया ह्यपि ।
सावित्रीत्येव नामास्याश्चक्रुर्विप्रास्तथा पिता ॥ - Mbh.वन.293.24

86. ततस्तु यज्ञे सावित्री साक्षात् तं सन्यमन्त्रयत् ।
निमन्त्रयन्ती प्रयुक्ता न हन्यां सहवासिनम् ॥ ⇨

Sarasvati :

She shines-forth in Indra's court.⁸⁷ In the Mahābhārata, she is described as the wife of Manu.⁸⁸ Sarasvati advised Tārakṣya about offerings to deities, gifts etc. In her talk with Tārakṣya she told him that mental faith was her form. She got nourishment from sacrificial offerings and became endowed with beauty and highest knowledge.⁸⁹

⇒ एवमुक्ता निवृत्ता सा प्रविष्टा यज्ञपावकम् ।

किं नु दुश्चरितं यज्ञे दिदृक्षुः सा रसातलम् ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.272.11-12

87. संवर्तो देवहव्यश्च विष्वक्सेनश्च वीर्यवान् ।

दिव्या आपस्तथौषध्यः श्रद्धा मेधा सरस्वती ॥ - Mbh.सभा.7.19

88. यथा भूम्यां भूमिपतिर्विश्यां च पुरुरवाः ।

ऋचीकः सत्यवत्यां च सरस्वत्यां यथा मनुः ॥ - Mbh.उद्योग.117.14

89. परं लोकं गोप्रदास्त्वाप्नुवन्ति

दत्तवानद्वाहं सूर्यलोकं व्रजन्ति ।

वासो दत्त्वा चन्द्रमसं तु लोकं

दत्त्वा हिरण्यममरत्वमेति ॥

धेनुं दत्त्वा सुप्रभां सुप्रदोहां

कल्याणवत्सामपलायिनीं च ।

यावन्ति रोमाणि भवन्ति तस्या-

स्तावद् वर्षाण्यासते दीवलोके ॥

अनद्वाहं सुव्रतं यो ददाति

हलस्य वोढारमनन्तवीर्यम् । ⇒

In the Mahābhārata, it is said that during Tripuradahana (burning of the city of the Tripuras) Sarasvati served as a

⇒ धुरन्धरं बलवन्तं युवानं
 प्राप्नोति लोकान् दश धेनुदस्य ॥
 ददाति यो वै कपिलां सचैलां
 कांस्योपदोहां द्रविणैस्तरीयैः ।
 तैस्तैर्गुणैः कामदुहाथ भूत्वा
 नरं प्रदातारमुपैति सा गौः ॥ - Mbh.वन.186.8-11
 यो ब्राह्मदेयां तु ददाति कन्यां
 भूमिप्रदानं च करोति विप्रे ।
 ददाति दानं विधिना च यश्च
 स लोकमाप्नोति पुरंदरश्च ॥
 यः सप्त वर्षाणि जुहोति ताक्ष्यं
 हव्यं त्वग्नाय 'नियतः साधुशीलः ।
 सप्तावरान् सप्त पूर्वान् पुनाति
 पितामहानात्मना कर्मभिः स्वैः ॥ - Mbh.वन.186.15-16
 न चाशुचिर्नाप्यनिर्णिक्तपाणि-
 नाब्रह्मविज्जुहुयान्नाविपश्चित् ।
 बुभुत्सवः शुचिकामा हि देवा
 नाश्रद्धधानाद्धि हविर्जुषन्ति ॥ - Mbh.वन.186.18
 श्रेष्ठानि यानि द्विपदां वरिष्ठ
 यज्ञेषु विद्वन्नुपपादयन्ति ।
 तैरेव चाहं सम्प्रवृद्धा भवामि
 चाप्यायिता रूपवती च विप्र ॥ ⇒

passage for the chariot of Śiva to advance easily.⁹⁰

Once, Yājñavalkya worshipped Sun-God and wanted to gain the knowledge of mantras of Yajurveda. Then Sun-God asked him to open his mouth in which Sarasvati along with Vedas entered his mouth.⁹¹ Then the auspicious Sarasvati appeared before Yājñavalkya wearing ornaments and consonants who could compose *Shatapatha Brahmana*.⁹² She

⇒ यच्चापि द्रव्यमुपयुज्यते ह
वानस्पत्यमायसं पार्थिवं वा ।
दिव्येन रूपेण च प्रज्ञया च
तेनैव सिद्धिरिति विद्धि विद्वन् ॥ - Mbh.वन.186.24-25

90. योक्त्राणि चक्रुर्वाहानां रोहकांस्तत्र कण्टकान् ।
धर्मः सत्यं तपोऽर्थश्च विहितास्तत्र रश्मयः ॥
अधिष्ठानं मनश्चासीत् परिरथ्या सरस्वती ।
नानावर्णाश्च चित्राश्च पताकाः पवनेरिताः ॥ - Mbh.कर्ण.34.33-34

91. ततः प्रणम्य शिरसा मयोक्तस्तपतां वरः ।
यजूंषि नोपयुक्तानि क्षिप्रमिच्छामि वेदितुम् ॥
ततो मां भगवानाह वितरिष्यामि ते द्विज
सरस्वतीह वाग्भूता शरीरं ते प्रवेक्ष्यति ॥
ततो ममाह भगवानास्यं स्वं विवृतं कुरु ।
विवृतं च ततो मेऽऽस्यं प्रविष्टा च सरस्वती ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.318.5-7

92. कृत्स्नं शतपथं चैव प्रणेष्यसि द्विजर्षभ ।
तस्यान्ते चापुनर्भाव बुद्धिस्तव भविष्यति ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.318.11

appeared before him sounding the word "Om".⁹³

Thus, Sarasvati was an important Goddess of learning according to the Mahābhārata. She was considered as the mother of Vedas. Even today also, people worship the Goddess Sarasvati with the same belief. In the Mahābhārata, she is not referred to as the goddess of fine arts carrying Veenā and seated on a swan. But this is seen in the idol of Sarasvati now a days and is described in later literature also.

या कुन्देन्दुतुषारहारधवला या शुभ्रवस्त्रान्विता
या वीणावरदण्डमण्डितकरा या श्वेतपद्मासना ।
या ब्रह्माच्युतशङ्करप्रभृतिभिर्देवैः सदा पूजिता
सा मां पातु सरस्वती भगवती निःशेषजाड्यापहा ॥

93. ततः प्रवृत्तातिशुभा स्वरव्यञ्जनभूषिता ।

ओङ्कारमादितः कृत्वा मम देवी सरस्वती ॥ - Mbh.शान्ति.318.14

Chapter - V

Conclusion

It is very interesting to review in short the previous chapters and try to evaluate the women's values in the Mahābhārata in comparison with the women in our modern society by reflecting over the similarities and differences.

Among the two upajivya works viz., Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, Mahābhārata is the most remarkable work in Sanskrit literature. It is the biggest of the world's epics. This work represents a whole literature rather than a single homogeneous work. It constitutes a veritable treasure-house of Indian lore. It is an authoritative book of law, morality and social and political philosophy, laying down rules for the attainment of dharma, artha, kāma and trivarga and also showing the way to liberation expounding the highest religious philosophy of India. Mahābhārata contains everything in this world. This epic consists of various types of women characters, which depicts the life of Indian woman in all its aspects.

Quite a large number of Mahā-kāvyas, Khaṇḍa-kāvyas, and plays based mostly on various episodes, and a few on the entire story of the Mahābhārata were written in classical Sanskrit from the early centuries. Kirātārjuniya of Bhāravi is

based on a simple episode from the Vanaparvā and describes in eighteen cantos Arjuna's propitiation of Shiva for divine weapons. Māgha wrote his ŚiśupālaVadha - slaying of Śiśupāla, the king of Chedi, by Kṛṣṇa. Kālidāsa's early famous work, the Kumārasambhava, describes the marriage of Śiva and Pārvati, which is found in the Mahābhārata. The large number of Kāvya, plays and Champu based on the story of Nala and Damayanti, which is one of the most romantic and pathetic episodes in the Mahābhārata. The most famous and also voluminous of such works is the Naiśadha-charita of Śrīharṣa. The Nala-champu or Damayanti-kathā of Trivikramabhaṭṭa has been written in champu style.

Quite a large number of plays, based on the main story, or the various episodes of the Mahābhārata have been written in sanskrit. The earliest of them are the six Mahābhārata plays ascribed to Bhāsa. His Madhyama-vyāyoga deals with the reunion of Bhīma with his demon-wife Hidimbā under extraordinary circumstances and reminds one of the epic tales of the demoness's love for Bhīma and the birth of their son Ghatotkaca. The Dūta-Ghatotkaca of Bhāsa deals with the message delivered by Ghatotkaca to the Kauravas, who were jubilant over the death of Abhimanyu. The Pancharātra deals with the robbing of Virāta's cows by the Kauravas, but it differs from the original in many details. The Dūta-vākya deals with the Kṛṣṇa's message to Duryodhana demanding a half of

the kingdom for the Pandavas. The *Ūru-bhaṅga* describes the duel between Bhima and Duryodhana in which the latter's thigh was broken by Bhima striking with his massive club. The *Karṇābhara* deals with the Indra's taking away the magic earrings of Karna after approaching him in the guise of a *Brāhmaṇa*. The *Abhijñāna-Śākuntala* of Kālidāsa, which has universally been acclaimed as one of the brightest gems in world literature, is a story of Duśyanta and Śhakuntalā as told in the *Mahābhārata*. The *Veṇi-saṁhāra* of Bhattanārāyaṇa turns round the incident of the great insult suffered by Draupadi when she was dragged by her hair by Duryodhana's younger brother Duḥśyāsana in the former's court and Draupadi's promise of not braiding her hair until she was avenged.

The above mentioned works written by different scholars on the basis of the story of the *Mahābhārata* prove that *Mahābhārata* was read and had been accepted and praised. Hence it can be said that this epic is a voluminous work.

Ancient people believed that the woman is the object of love and respect. Manu says न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यमर्हति । It means as "There is no occasion for a woman to be independent. Unfortunately, this has been wrongly translated as "Woman does not deserve freedom", and women are ill-treated in the society. On the other hand, *Manusmṛti* safeguards the interest and well-being of the women in the society. The constitution guarantees

equality of opportunity for women in every sphere of activity. Women must be given more freedom within their chosen life patterns and more freedom in choosing alternative life patterns. Woman is called Sahadharmini as she co-operates in Dharma and Kāma. She is also called Jāyā as she takes man's sattva in her womb. Therefore, it is said that woman is the chief partner in Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Mokṣa. The ethical standards, ideals, life styles of the women in the Mahābhārata are worthy to be followed by the women of modern society also. The women of respectable families virtuous and dutiful are highly praised and admired even today. Women, since ancient times, are respected mainly in their roles as daughters, wives, mothers and also daughters-in-laws. As daughter was said to be a source of misery, not because she was unwanted, but because of the anxiety of parents to find suitable bridegroom for her and for her future happiness. A son, unlike a daughter, could free his father from ancestral debt, could be an earning member and can take up the responsibility of the family and could be useful in wars. But in modern times, the idea of ancestral debt is disappearing and a daughter can earn and take the responsibility of the family and even help in war. Kalpana Chawla has shown extraordinary courage as an astronaut in the 21st century. This is definitely worth praising and clearly convinces the development of confidence developed in women to come up in various fields requiring male like courage in the recent decades.

Mahābhārata teaches the codes of life, and a philosophy of social and ethical relations and speculative thoughts on human problems. Many of the statements referring to women, are more or less theoretical rather than practical.

Marriage or vivāha saṁskāra is very important among the sixteen saṁskāras ordained by Dharmaśāstras. After this, women will be absolutely dependent on her husband for some time. During the married life, the man attends to his legitimate biological and emotional urges but not by deviating from the path of righteousness. A householder apart from supporting his family has five other duties viz., studying and teaching of holy books, worship of God, and observance of rites and rituals prescribed for him, rearing domestic animals and hospitality to guests and the destitute. To serve the guests well and to satisfy their desire was the primary duty of a house-holder (Gṛhastha).

गृहस्थस्य हि धर्मोऽग्रः सम्प्राप्तातिथिपूजनम् ॥
 अतिथिः पूजितो यस्य गृहस्थस्य तु गच्छति ।
 नान्यस्तस्मात् परो धर्म इति प्राहुर्मनीषिणः ॥

- Mbh.अनुशासन.2.69-70

शरणागतस्य कर्तव्यमातिथ्यं हि प्रयत्नतः ।
 पञ्चयज्ञप्रवृत्तेन गृहस्थेन विशेषतः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.146.6

Women co-operated with their husbands in following this

dharma by serving the guests in the absence of their husbands.

According to the Epic, marriage is also a Dharma for women. Hindu marriages are of permanent nature not to be dissolved at one's own sweet will. It is no longer a casual contract. It is not like even wedding milk and sugar. Hindu marriages are based on spiritual grounds. That is why a Hindu woman desires to be associated with her husband not only in the present life but in many lives to come till eternity. The wedded couple no longer remains a couple, but moulded into one. Women should be respected as Gods reside there where women are worshipped. The Epic says that women are not independent right from their birth till death. She should be always protected by men, before marriage by her father, after marriage by her husband and in her old age by her son. After marriage, man enters into Gṛhasthāshrama, or the stage of a householder, for which smṛti's give much importance. Without this marriage ceremony, man is not entitled to perform यज्ञ or यज्ञ or any sacrifice. So, this stage of householder of Gṛhasthāshrama is considered as the mother of all the āshramas. In case of females, all the saṁskāras or sacraments should be performed silently without the recitation of mantras. But only on the occasion of matrimonial sacrament, vedic mantras must be recited.

Girls knew from their childhood that marriage, the first

religious rite with vedic mantras, was obligatory for them even for attaining spiritual goals, as seen from the example of Subhrū. They considered that their parents or other elderly relatives had the authority to give them away in marriage. According to Yājñavalkya Smṛti the father, grand father, elder brother, any senior member of the family or the mother are the authorised persons to make kanyādāna. The claim of father in respect of kanyādāna comes first and after him anyone of the above mentioned persons in the absence of the previous one is authorised. If none of them is available, the girl is free to make her own choice of the husband. So, the parents were particular about the daughter's marriage and about the suitability and virtues of the bridegrooms. They gave preferences to the choice of their daughters. Girls had the opportunity to find for themselves the husband to their liking and for love marriages also, as in the case of Shakuntalā, Savitri etc. But if a girl's marriage was not arranged by her elders after three years of her attaining maturity, she was to find a suitable person and get married.

A good marriage is a welcome while a bad one is worse than anything. It is not only the duty of a husband to protect his wife, but it is also the duty of the brother, father, kith and kins, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law etc. by providing food, clothes and ornaments.

The R̥gvedic society emerges with a well-established home which could not have been possible in the pre-martial stage of sexual relation. The Mahābhārata informs us that Svetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, established the institution of marriage, when he saw his mother being taken away by force by a brāhmin in the presence of his father. He could not tolerate this and established a restriction for human beings.

The eight types of marriages mentioned in the Dharmaśāstras are described in the Mahābhārata also. These forms seem to be the methods of settling marriage after each of which the actual religious rituals for the marriage were performed. Brāhma marriage was the best and the most popular in which a virtuous and suitable bridegroom was invited by the girl's elders and the girl adorned according to their capacity was given in marriage to him. This is the custom in modern society also. Mādri's is the only example of Āsura marriage in which Bhīshma had paid a large sum to her father as bride price. This was condemned as the sale of girl but according to some, if the money was gifted to the girl, it was an act of kindness and affection towards the girl and not a sale. In the Daiva marriage, the girl was married to the chief priest performing the Yajnā (sacrifice) for her father. This is considered meritorious. Śāntā's marriage with R̥shyashringa is the only example of Daiva marriage. In Ārsha marriage, a pair of bull and cow was given, and it was considered a sale and

was condemned. Paisācha in which a girl unconscious and helpless was carried away for marriage, was also condemned. Because, the wife, can not be secured simply by capture. Willingness of both the parties concerned is very necessary which prevailed even during primitive ages. This results a pre-arranged natural harmony between the husband and wife as both have united without any external force. That is the way Gāndharva form of marriage must have been accepted, praised and followed, than the Rākṣasa or the paisācha form of marriage. Prājāpatya, in which the bridegroom's people asked for the girls hand in marriage for progeny, was perhaps included later in the Brāhma. There are no examples of the three types - Ārsha, Paishāchya and Prājāpatyā. Gāndharva was love marriage consummated without rituals as in the case of Shakuntalā. Rakshasa, in which a girl willing as in the case of Subhadra or unwilling as Ambā were carried away for marriage. This was recommended for kṣatriyas. Swayamvara is not included in the list of the eight types of marriages. Here, some condition was put to win the hand of the bride. Sometimes, it turned into Rākṣasa marriage in which the bride could be carried away for somebody by some powerful person who could defeat all opponents. If liked by the bride, it was like a Gāndharva marriage as was Rukmini's, who was already in love with Kṛṣṇa. But sometimes it proved disastrous for the girl, as was for Ambā who wanted to marry Shālwa in her swayamvara, but was carried away by Bhishma and then was

rejected by both. In the Mahābhārata, we find Draupadi's marriage as an exception, which is an example of polyandry. But the epic states that Draupadi's marriage with the five pāṇḍavās was ordained by God in her previous birth. Hence, it should not be followed by anybody. One man for one woman and the vice versa is the ideal condition and that must have been the intention of the ancient sociologists and law-makers. Drupada also expressed the same view. This shows that polyandry even then was not acceptable. That is why, for Draupadi's marriage so many arguments and illustrations had to be put forward to convince Drupada of its sanctity.

Marriage being a religious merit to last lifelong, there was no scope for Divorce. However, there were some contract marriages in exceptional cases which could be ended as was done by Gangā, Mādhavī, Hidimbā etc. But after that, none of them remarried. Women had a special place of her own with regard to her aims, field of work and duties in which the question of equality with men did not arise. On the other hand woman was the counterpart of man and the two together became a complete being. As Milton has stated in his *Paradise Lost*, "He for God, and she for God in him," was true in the Mahābhārata. No vow, no fasting was necessary for woman to attain salvation other than serving her husband with full devotion. The matrimonial relation of the couple was based on mutual faithfulness and love. They were together in happiness

and misery. She was alert to keep him on the right path, if necessary using even harsh and powerful words. The woman, as a housewife along with her husband, was responsible for all religious and social duties. Wife herself was considered home, without her home is a forest. A housewife's good taste was seen in her management of the house, i.e. in furnishing and decorating her house, for her dress, ornaments, etc. A good wife should always keep her husband happy, with which, Gods will also be happy and bless her.

न सा स्त्री ह्यभिमन्तव्या यस्यां भर्ता न तुष्यति ।
 तुष्टे भर्तारि नारीणां तुष्टाः स्युः सर्वदेवताः ॥
 अग्निसाक्षितमित्येव भर्ता वै दैवतं परम् ।
 दावग्निनेव निर्दग्धा सपुष्पस्तबका लता ॥
 भस्मीभवति सा नारी यस्य भर्ता न तुष्यति ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.145.3-5

A wife must be true to her husband in her marriage vows and lead the life of an ideal pativrata. By keeping her house clean, she invites Goddess Laxmi to reside in her home. Hence, we can say that a good wife is a Lakshmi of the house. So, a man who has a good wife is called श्रीमान्. Druapadi clearly expresses the duty of a pativrata woman to Satyabhāma in the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, which are worthy to be respected by modern women also.

न गृहं गृहमित्याहुर्गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते ॥ :

As told in the Śānti Parva of the Mahabharata, a house can be really felt as a house unless it has the Gṛhiṇī (wife) in it. It is said that a house without a wife is as good as forest. This clearly emphasises the importance of Gṛhiṇī, the women in the house.

यस्य भार्या गृहे नास्ति साध्वी च प्रियवादिनी ।

अरण्यं तेन गन्तव्यं यथारण्यं तथा गृहम् ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.144.17

Infact husband and wife are the two wheels of the chariot. Hence, it is but natural that both of them will have to have a perfect understanding, patience, co-operation for leading a successful life. Otherwise the family peace will be up set. And in the modern days divorces are the ultimate result. The reason for this result may also be due to the fact that women is no longer weak. She is coming up in the various fields of life with confidence. Hence she need not depend on the man for her survival. In spite of this fact, the normal tendency of the woman is to adjust herself to the situation and make sincere efforts to get the result tilting in favour of the family.

In the Mahābhārata, instances of pre-marital sex relations are also found. Some unmarried girls had sexual relations with a man and attained motherhood and in due course, they got

married according to the usual religious rights and the children born to them shared equal rights with the other children of the mother in the wedlock. Vyāsa, the legendry complier of the great Epic was himself a progeny of unwedded love. He is addressed as the son of Parāśara, and Karna as the son of Surya and not of Pāṇḍu. Vyāsa's mother Matsyagandha was the foster daughter of fisherman fell in love with sage Parāśara. Parāśara promised that her maidenhood would be restored to her after the intercourse, and a sweet-perfume would come out from her body. Kunti, the mother of Pāṇḍavas got a boon from sage Durvāśa, with which, she became very curious and to test it, she invited Surya by reciting mantras. He told Kunti that a woman was free to behave as she liked, and demolished the fears of Kunti by telling her that after the intercourse she would regain her virginity.

The episode of Mādhavi, as described in the story of Gālava also lays stress on virginity as a virtue even when cohabitation is allowed. She also had the boon that she will regain her virginity after each delivery with which her father gave her in marriage to the three different kings and as the bride-price, asked the horses possessed by each. Mādhavi accepted the situation whatever came before her without any hesitation. This is the sign of obedience to her father who was the sole judge of his daughter's morals.

During the vedic period, marriage was contracted outside the family circle, which is considered as incestuous relation. The epic evidence confirms vedic practice. Karna condemns sex freedom in the Madra and Bāl̥hika countries. There is also a positive evidence in the epic condemning incestuous relation, particularly between the father and the daughter. Goddess Gaṅgā was accepted by king Pratipa as his daughter-in-law, as she sat on the rightside of his lap reserved for one's children (apatyas) or daughter-in-law. This shows that not only the daughter, but also the daughter-in-law was unapproachable. Arjuna refused Urvaśi saying that she was the wife of his ancestor and hence guru to him. Just as Kunti, Mādri and Saci are his mothers, so she also was fit to be worshipped. This shows that sex-relations between a mother and a son were not within the bounds of dharma. It is clear that the epic reflects the fact that not only the mother but any woman who may be considered to have the same status as one's mother is considered unapproachable, as seen in case of Uttuṅka. He was approached by the women of the āśrama with a request to cohabit with his preceptor Devāśarma's wife so that her ṛtu may not go waste. But he thought that he was not instructed by his preceptor to fulfill this demand. So, he bestowed upon him all the siddhis and permitted him to go home. This indicates that the preceptor's wife was given the status of the mother. Uttuṅkā's behaviour is ideal rather than normal. The

smṛtis enumerate sexual relations with the wife of a preceptor as the greatest sin.

Caste system (varṇa system) as we understand today, might have existed during the vedic age. Different scholars have ascribed different opinions regarding the development of caste system during the vedic period. Some scholars say that caste system was based on heredity, and was unknown in early vedic period. The scholars, who support the existence of caste system during early vedic period refer to the following mantras which is found in the tenth mandala of Ṛgveda.

ब्रह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद बहू राजन्यः कृतः
उरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पदभ्यामशूरो अजायते ॥

The mantra says that the Brahmanas sprang from the head of Brahma, the Kṣatriyas from his arms, the Vaiśyas from his thighs, and the Sūdras from his feet. This mantra in no way indicates the existence of hereditary castes but refers to the division of society on the principle of division of labour. The Brahmanas who possessed learning are called the head of the society. The Kṣatriyas who possessed strength are called the arms of society. The Vaiśyas who were to go from place to place for the purpose of trade and commerce are spoken of as thighs of human society. And the Sūdras who were illiterate and unfit for the higher duties were represented as the feet of human society.

Rules regulating inter-varṇa marriage however was a serious lapse in social behaviour which was not tolerated. According to Bhisma, a brāhmin has a right to marry a woman of three varṇas. A kṣatriya can marry a woman belonging to the two varṇas while a vaiśya has a right to marry a woman of only one varṇa, because it is only on these wives that a progeny equal to one's own status can be produced. It was believed that a man of the higher three varṇas can marry a woman belonging to a śudra varṇa; but such a wife is meant only for pleasure, and not for acquiring religious merit or begetting progeny. Though a brāhmin is permitted to marry a woman of all the four varṇas, only a brāhmin woman can serve him better than the woman of other varṇas. In spite of the theoretical ban on marriage with a śudra wife, the eminent persons in the Mahābhārata contract marriage with the woman of śudra or even lower varṇas. King Santanu married Matsyagandha, a daughter of a fisherman. Arjuna married Nāga woman Ulūpi by name. Bhīmā married a rākṣasa woman Hidimbā and her son was acknowledged as Bhīma's son and fought with the Kauravas in the Mahābhārata war. Dhṛtarāṣṭra raised a son Yuyutsu on a vaiśya woman. The sage Dirghatamas, established sexual connections with a śudra woman and begot eleven sons upon her and declared them to be his own, and initiated them in the vedic lores. A brāhmin Gautama had a marriage with a dasyu woman, with which he

lost his brāhminhood and a fellow brāhmin who had preserved it, refused even to touch things or eat the food offered by him. If a brāhmin marries a śudra woman, he has to expiate sin and if he produces children on her has to perform double prāyascitta according to śāstras. This represents the final state in the anuloma marriages with a woman of śudra varṇa. Bhiṣma specifically states that only the savarna wife is entitled to participate in religious ceremonies. He clearly explains the rights of sons born to the parents of different varṇas, and established the difference firmly. Thus, we can conclude that anuloma marriage was allowed and encouraged. But pratiloma marriages on the other hand, were prohibited, which can be seen in Drupada's words. When Pāṇḍavas disguised as brahmins took away Draupadi, he asked Dhṛṣṭadyumna, that whether his daughter was taken away by a śudra or a person of a lower birth or by a vaiśya. The Sānti parva of Mahābhārata also states the women (स्त्री) Diamond (रत्न) and water have no दोष and hence it allows a man even to marry the woman of a lower varṇa.

Dowry or Stri-dhana was given by the parents of the bride and kins to provide her the economic security for any eventuality in her life. The transaction of wealth in the forms of Stridhana along with a woman in marriage and Varadakṣina offered to the bridegroom by her parents and other kins do

have considerable sense of elevation of prestige of the donors of the woman. The new type of modernisation and educational system have brought new changes in the social structure. New values of status acquisition and achievement have become, to some extent, part of socio-economic system in present time. Now a system is evolved where persons with power and resources can accomodate their self interests easily while that of others are cornered because they do not have the adequate resources at their command. The new forces of modernisation along with the consumer culture of a partially profit-oriented society have induced the dowry-based marriages in which the better positioned bridegrooms are highly rated and demanded in the matrimonial market. In this situation, the value of woman is frequently under-rated in this male-dominated society. The parents are in competition to give their daughters in marriage to a desirable and better boy. The system of dowry is under going with uneven development. Well intentioned citizens and voluntary organizations have started voicing their concerns against it since long. Dowry, as a modern phenomenon has been compounded by certain other conditions of the economy and the society. For some people, it is customary or religious practice and for others it is to maintain or acquire a new status and prestige. Still for some, it may be an instrument to accumulate easy money out of greedyness for varied purposes like to marry their own daughters or acquire economic security

for the parents who would have invested much money on the placement of their sons and now may think that after marriage their earning son may go away and stay out side without caring for them in the old age.

Mahābhārata suggests the duties of all the four varṇas, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Sūdra.

न ब्राह्मणो निवेदेत किञ्चिद् राजनि वेदवित् ।
 स्ववीर्याद् राजवीर्याच्च स्ववीर्यं बलवत्तरम् ॥
 तस्मात् राजः सदा तेजो दुःसहं ब्रह्मवादिनीम् ।
 कर्ता शास्ता विधाता च ब्राह्मणो देव उच्यते ॥
 तस्मिन्नाकुशलं ब्रूयान्न शुष्कामीरयेद् गिरम् ।
 क्षत्रियो बाहुवीर्येण तरेदापमात्मनः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.165.18-20

From this, it is clear that, only a Brahmin is entitled to perform Yāga or sacrifices. It is the duty of a Kṣatriya to participate in wars and fight for the victory. But, in the real sense, a Kṣatriya will not achieve more than a Brāhmin according to the dictum :

धिग्बलं क्षत्रियबलं ब्रह्मतेजो बलंबलम् ॥

- Mbh.आदि.74.85

Mahābhārata also advises the men to respect the man even of a lower varṇa if he is a learned person.

श्राद्धधानः शुभां विद्यां हीनादपि समाप्नुयात् ।

सुवर्णमपि चामेध्यादाददीताविचारयन् ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.65.31

Even the man of a Śūdra Varṇa can use weapons to protect cows, brahmins and also himself.

गोब्रह्मणहितार्थं च वर्णानां संकरेषु च ।

वैश्यो गृह्णाति शस्त्राणि परित्राणार्थमात्मनः ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.165.33

The idea of fidelity to husband had some exceptions. Karna and Duhsāsana asked Draupadi in the assembly to leave her husbands and marry someone else. Nahuśa was eager to marry Indrāṇi.

It is a fact that, the number of divorce cases in the courts of law are multiplying day-by-day. It indicates certain basic weaknesses of the social set-up and thinking behind it. It is natural to have differences of opinion among the couples but that certainly does not mean divorce. An understanding can be developed and a smooth life of compromise can be lived. Divorce takes place where marriage functions just as an agent or as a license to satisfy the lust. Difference of opinion between the couples vanish where the state of non-dualism is attained. This is clearly expressed by Manu -

एतावानेव पुरुषो यज्जायाऽऽत्मा प्रजेति हि ।

विप्राः प्राहुस्तथा चैतद्यो भर्ता सा स्मृताङ्गना ॥

- Manusmṛti.IX.45

In the Mahābhārata, there were some contract marriages in exceptional cases which could be ended as was done by Gangā, Mādhavi, Hidimbā etc.

Thus, Hindu marriage, which took place in the presence of fire-God is religious and can be a real solution for the conjugal peace on which the social welfare wholly depends. The tendency of Hindu husband-wife is to feel that their relation is always uninterrupted. It can not be broken births after births. So, even if they indulge in quarrel, they find a way in bringing the quarrel to an end by surrender and patience. This tendency of surrender and patience is not found in the couples of America and Russia, and so the relation will come to an end or will result into divorce automatically. In Russia, the game - 'today marriage tomorrow divorce' is being played.

A devout Hindu wife can not live without her husband after his death.

पतिहीना तु का नारी सती जीवितुमुत्सहेत् ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.148.9

This means that the custom of sati might have prevailed during the Mahābhārata period in some cases. A man will be happy even in the forest if he is accompanied with his wife.

वृक्षमूलेऽपि दयिता यस्य तिष्ठति तद् गृहम् ।
प्रासादोऽपि तया हीनः कान्तार इति निश्चितम् ॥

- Mbh.शान्ति.144.12

Modern luxurious goods will not give happiness to a man in the real sense. This shows the importance of a wife in the life of a man. She is more valued than everything in this world. This is the basis of the purity of our Hindu culture. Now a days, these emotions are disappearing as some people give importance to qualification and money rather than other things in choosing their wife.

The third chapter deals with the women's role as a daughter-in-law, housewife, and a mother. It also deals with the educational, religious, political, social and economical achievements of women. Draupadi was a dutiful daughter-in-law and personally looked after his mother-in-law Kunti's needs like clothes, bed, bath, meals etc. Another women character in the Mahābhārata, Brāhmaṇi proved that the housewife was responsible for the welfare of the whole family. Sāvitrī, was affectionate to her parents-in-law and inturn loved by them as a daughter. That is why Dyumatsena, her father-in-law allowed her to go to forest as it was her

first desire after marriage. Druapadi, won the heart of her mother-in-law Kunti and was blessed to become the mother of virtuous son, she also wished Draupadi all the happiness on this earth.

Hindus believed that mother is greater than all even to God. It is the mother who provides all the wants of the child. She looks after the child's growth, development and sustenance. We are more free with our mother. We open our heart more freely before our mother than before our father. She sacrifices all her desires for the sake of her children. She is known as the first *Guru*. Child is not born with social skills, which include talking, proper way of eating, dressing, the way to behave normally in different times and different occasions etc. The young child learns great deal from his parents and friends in general and from his mother in particular. As such the responsibility of the mother increases with the growth of the child for improvement of his habits, physical, mental and spiritual developments. The mother teaches the child to become a responsible matured person. It is believed that the child assimilates the teachings, if imparted to his mother when the child is in his mother's womb. It is said that when Abhimanyū was to be born, Arjuna, once started describing the design of the Cakravyūha (Battle Array) to Subhadrā. She learnt upto the way of entrance to the Cakravyūha but fell asleep afterwards and could not listen the way to exit. Because of

this, Abhimanyū entered the Cakravyūha formed by the Kauravas in the great war of Mahābhārata, but could not get out of it, as he was unaware of the passage to exit.

In the Mahābhārata, Gāndhārī always blessed her sons "यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः". She never differentiated between her sons and Kunti's sons. Great kṣatriya women like Vidulā always wished her son Sañjaya to fight in the war for victory. She emboldened her son who was defeated by Sindhurāja, by saying that she would be more proud of a son who had sacrificed his life in the battle field than the one who returned home defeated. Her teachings to her son regarding the duties of a kṣatriya are worthy to be admired and gains political importance. Mother is glorified in the Mahābhārata, but on the other hand, the importance of father is not ignored. It is an accepted fact that mother takes care of her child more affectionately than the father. But both the mother and the father always wish their son victory, fame and wealth. In return, a son must fulfill the dreams of his father and mother to satisfy them.

Education is termed as the heart of the nation. Education has been regarded both as an end in itself and as a means of realizing other desirable ends. It develops the personality and rationality of individuals, qualifies them to fulfil certain economic, political and cultural functions and thereby improves

their socio-economic status. It has been recognized as a major instrument which societies can have to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. In the early age, the aim of Indian social reformers was to use education to make women more capable of fulfilling their traditional roles as wives, and mothers and not to make them more efficient and active units in the process of socio-economic or political development. The attainment of independence and the constitutional guarantee of equality introduced new dimensions with the call on women to play multiple roles in the polity, the economy and the society. There is a Chinese saying - "If you are thinking of the year, plant rice, if you are thinking of a decade, plant trees, if you are thinking of a century educate the people." In the sphere of education women in India have been equal with men to develop the full potentialities from the ancient period. During the ancient period, the final aim of education was mokṣa or mukti - the attainment of a Life Immortal, and not the worldly success and prosperity. The Indian educational system lays great stress on the absolute necessity of a personal relation between the teacher and the taught. In ancient India, education meant vedic education. In those days, women studied vedic literature and participated in the sacrifices. But to recite vedic prayers, upanayana ritual was necessary, without which one is not entitled to study the vedas. This means that upanayana was obligatory even for the

girls. पुरा कल्पे तु नारीणां मौञ्जीबन्धनमिष्यते । The Atharva veda clearly states that a maiden wins a young husband through Brahmacharya or vedic studentship. In the Mahābhārata, Kunti was well versed in vedic mantras which were granted to her by a great vedic Brahmin. Royal ladies like Kunti and Draupadi are very good examples of a incomparable strength of character, versatility and scholarship of women of ancient India. During the Mahābhārata people, women were taught arts or dancing, singing and instrumental music. Uttarā, daughter of king Virāta and her companions were taught these arts at home. Mādhavi, daughter of king Yayāti was expert in music. In modern society, the thread ceremony, after which boys were sent out for education to preceptors living in hermitages has lost its importance. Today, the thread ceremony or upanayana has become more or less a social festival with feasts and gifts. In modern times, however, there is no distinction in education between girls and boys. And all fields of knowledge are open to them for higher education. The aim of women's education should be to prepare them for independent careers. Marriage should not be the sole aim of their lives. It is recognised that educated wives and mothers are an asset to a nation in general and family in particular. Women should get education according to their needs. She should be taught cooking, nursing, child psychology, nutrition, home economics, interior decoration etc. Other than this, she should also get

education, which helps her to work as a teacher, professor, lawyer, an engineer or as a doctor etc. as the case may be. By doing this, she will be economically independent. Modern inventions have made it easy in reaching the remote corners also to provide good quality of education to all possible. Education of women should generate awareness of values and attitudes, which determine the health and progress of a nation.

Women were not an impediment in the path of religion. Her presence and co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies, which increased her religious value. Gods do not accept oblations by a bachelor. This proves that the wife was indispensable from the spiritual and religious point of view. Mahābhārata does not allow the woman to observe fast or sacrifice separately from her husband. It suggests that for a woman, her husband himself is her God. Women observed pātivratya (fidelity to her husband). Women like Sāvitri on the strength of spiritual power attained by pātivratya, could bring back her dead husband Satyavan back to life and begot boons from Yama, the God of death. Women like Draupadi believed in God, and prayed Lord Kṛṣṇa when Duḥśāsana started pulling her sārī. It can be said that if an effort is made to spread rational knowledge of the fundamental principles of Hinduism among women, they would undoubtedly become much better representatives of our culture and religion.

Women had the power to curse on the strength of their spiritual power acquired by *pātivratya*. Damayanti, cursed Kali to face more difficulties than her husband Nala, with which Kali, who had taken resort in Nala, had to leave him. With the spiritual power of *Gāndhāri*, she could see through the covering on her eyes, and as a result, only the nails of his toes turned black by her sight. Another woman *Brāhmaṇi*, cursed *Kalmāśapāda* is an example of a lady who had extraordinary power.

In political life, women were not installed on the throne when sons were there, yet they did influence the political life of the country as the advice of wives and mothers were respected by rulers. War was not the field of women's activity as physical strength was necessity in fighting in battles. But, they played an important role as they made necessary attempts to encourage their husbands and sons to fight for victory. Modern age, being a mechanical age, physical strength has lost much of its importance. Now, women are capable of entering any field including war.

The *Mahābhārata*, being the story of heroic persons, the women mainly depicted are heroic daughters, heroic wives and heroic mothers, who soft as flowers could become harder than diamond when needed.

In the pre-independent India, two major forces, among others, which were important in creating awareness and hopes among women were nationalist movement and the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Despite their miseries and misfortunes, thousands of women of different communities and all walks of life came out of their homes to join the nationalist movement as political campaigners, participate actively in the protest marches and demonstrations. Nehru has said, "our women came to the forefront and took charge of the struggle. Women had always been there of course but there was an avalanche of them which took not only the British government but their own men-folk by surprise. There were these women. They were of the upper or middle classes leading sheltered lives in their homes, peasant women, working class women, rich women - pouring out in thousands against the government orders and police lathis. It was not only the display of courage and daring but what was even more surprising was the original power they showered." During the freedom struggle, women proved themselves of extraordinary capacities and projected a free, strong and courageous image of Indian womanhood. Without the co-operation of women, freedom struggle would not have succeeded. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, at whose call thousands of women of all classes participated in the political movement, declared that the independence struggle was "to gain independence not for the literate and the rich in

India, but for the dumb millions. I shall work in India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice. In India, in which there shall be no high class and low class of people." Gāndhiji's half of India's 'dumb millions' were women, for whom he wanted independence along with other half consisting of men. His life mission was to bring women on equal footing with men which he declared in the following terms :

"I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disabilities and suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality."

"Women are the companion of men gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minutest details of the activities of man, and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as men. By sheer force of a vicious custom, even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying a superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not have."

During the Mahābhārata, some kind of purda was observed as seen during Dhṛtarāstra's departure to forest. This is seen among certain families, probably on account of a notion of prestige, that royal ladies should not come within the gaze of vulgar eyes. Women who felt themselves to be in helpless

condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case with the women who did not have proper male guardians. But women were an important member of the society. There were occasions when women come in contact with outsiders. In the social structure, the killing of a woman was banned. In the words of Brahmin's wife, and in so many instructions, slaying of a woman was a great sin. Men were not allowed to use weapons against women. That is why Bhiṣma did not use weapons against Śikhandi who was previously a woman. Thus, by establishing freedom and restriction, according to circumstances, society's purity was kept intact.

Women enjoyed economic independence during the Mahābhārata period. At that time women was the joint owner of her husband's property. Draupadi did not think that the husband has no right to sell or stake away his wife. She had a complete knowledge of the vast treasury of her husbands when Nala was losing in the gambling with Puśkara, Damayanti, sent financial information to him, and when the loss was complete, she started planning for the future. This shows that though the women were not an earning member of the family but was an important asset in monetary matters during the Mahābhārata period. But today women are educated and earn equally or even more by working in various capacities. Such working women can help in increasing the financial position of their families. Modern age, is a

technological age. Woman is capable of entering any field including war. After independence, choice of pregnancy due to means of birth control, Indian Government's recent policy of reservation of posts for women in all fields have inculcated a sense of individuality in modern Indian woman. Government is putting its efforts for the upliftment of women. But inspite of economic independence, she is still under the domination of male members of the family. Due to inflation in modern age, the average middle class woman has to take up some job to maintain the family. Mahābhārata states equal rights to both sons and daughters. It maintains that daughter must get atleast half the property, if not the whole. The acquisition of property was also on the basis of their births. Women's value is increased in modern India because of the new Government rules which are in their favour.

Government had passed many Acts during pre-independence and post-independence periods in favour of women.

1) Bengal Sati Regulation XVIII.1829 :

Raja Ram Mohan Roy continued fighting the appeals and petitions from the orthodox Hindus against abolition of Sati. According to this Act, Sati was legally abolished.

2) Indian Divorce Act 1869 :

This Act provided for divorce by the wife or husband under certain specific circumstances.

3) The Married Women's Property Act 1897 - 1974

According to this act, women could own the movable property awarded to them by their husbands or parents through the practice of Streedhan. This Act was enlarged in 1974, and hence the scope of Streedhan has been widened. It includes earnings by a woman and the money she acquired through her artistic and literary skills.

4) Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act, 1984 :

This Act made both the giver and taker of dowry guilty.

Before independence, it was Mahatma Gandhi who first gave a call to women and mobilised their strength to achieve Independence. He made them come out of their homes and join the national programme of picketing and banning the foreign cloth shops and wine shops. In building up the nation, women have rarely occupied the leading position. Acharya Vinoba Bhave, feel that a movement to awaken the inner strength of women (Stree Shakti Jagaran) is essential to reassure the woman that she is a full fledged human being with powers of understanding and action.

Part III of constitution of India deals with the fundamental rights. Articles 12 to 35 are applicable to all the citizens irrespective of sex. However, certain provisions perfect the rights of women.

According to Article 15 (3) of the constitution, discrimination on grounds of religion race caste, sex, and place of birth shall not prevent the state from making any special provisions for women and children. Article 15 (1) prohibits gender discrimination. Article 15 (3) lifts that ignominy and permits the state to positively discriminate in favour of women to make special provisions to ameliorate their social, economic and political conditions and accord them parity. (Cf. Dr. S.C. Tripathi and Vibha Arora, Law Relating to Women and Children, Central Law Publications, Allahabad, Jan.2005, Page No.1)

Many Acts are passed in favour of security and welfare of women by the Government. For example :

- 1) Dowry Prohibition Act 1991
- 2) Breast Milk Substitute Feeding Bottles and Teats Act 1994
- 3) Hindu Succession Act 1992
- 4) Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1975
- 5) Prenatal Diagnostic Technique Act 1996

This Act has been amended in 2003. According to the amendment the abortion of female foetus has been prohibited.

The fourth chapter deals with the female deities in the Mahābhārata. God is being worshipped by the people in India since vedic period. Goddesses Durgā, Pārvati, Lakśmi, Aditi, Swāhā, Indrāṇi, Vinatā and Kadrū, Sukanyā, Arundhati, Sāvitrī and Sarasvati. These deities are still worshipped by modern women also. This shows that belief or faith in God is still prevailing in the modern people and they even now believe that God protects them in difficulties and hence pray and worship them.

As a conclusion, it can be said that women exhibited valuable qualities in the Mahābhārata period. They are worthy of inspiring even the modern women for fulfilling her aspirations. The names of these ancient women are everlasting. The Greatness of the Mahābhārata can be realized only by studying the life of these women with their precious qualities, which are valuable even for modern societies. The teachings of the Mahābhārata are worthy to be followed even today in the fast changing modern age. Even in the days to come, the safeguard of chastity is the most valuable and venerable wealth of a woman. In fact it is the highest goal of her life. The condition of Hindu woman is far better in comparison to the women of other countries and religions. She is more respected

in society and house and her powers are supreme. The western materialistic culture has made the life selfish and has disunited the chain of social peace and system. The creator has produced a great jewel like woman. Western scholars say that India was a cradle of culture and civilization since the very dawn of History. To cultivate such a glorious history Indian women played a prominent role. Hence, it can be said that because of women folk, India has reached a lofty peak of cultural development.



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